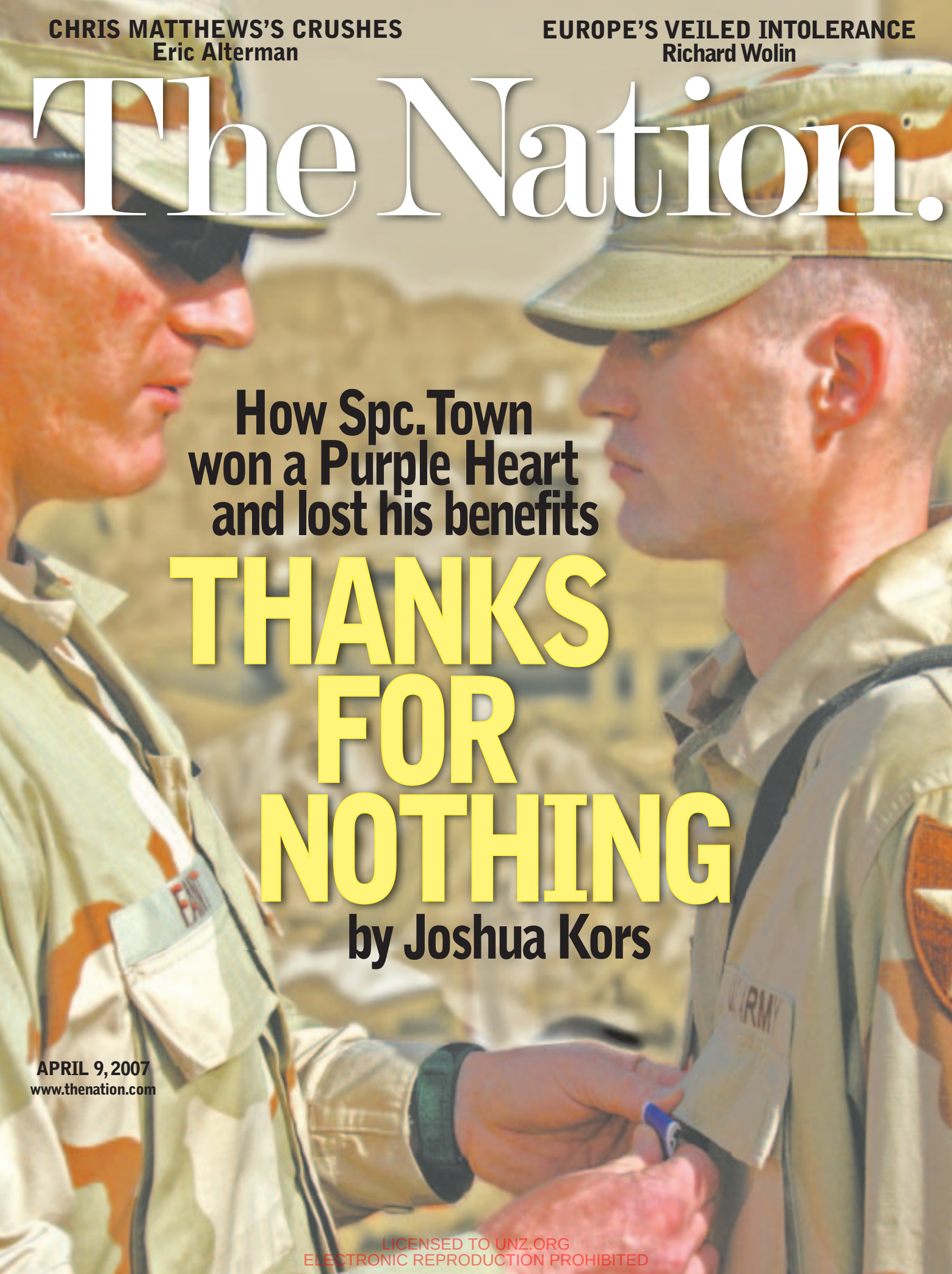
CHRIS MATTHEWS'S CRUSHES
Eric Alterman

EUROPE'S VEILED INTOLERANCE
Richard Wolin

The Nation.



How Spc. Town won a Purple Heart and lost his benefits

THANKS FOR NOTHING

by Joshua Kors

APRIL 9, 2007
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LETTERS

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

REMEMBER THE MAINE!

Leesburg, Va.

■ Regarding Alexander Cockburn's March 5 "Beat the Devil" column on the *New York Times* and the war, titled "Sold to Mr. Gordon, Another Bridge!": This is the centennial of yellow journalism. William Randolph Hearst involved us in war against the decaying Spanish (read Habsburg) Empire over the Maine—which we blew up—early in the last century. It sold newspapers! Now in the beginning death throes of this pulp fiction and its copycats, the *Times* is involving us in a war against… what is it this time? Al Qaeda? Evil? Terrorism?

SANDER FREDMAN

Plainview, NY

■ And now the Iranians claim that bombs used by terrorists were US manufactured. Will Mr. Gordon find them as credible as he finds the Bush Administration? Keep up the good work, Mr. Cockburn.

THOMAS PAUL

DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT HISTORY…

Saint Cloud, Minn.

■ Gary Younge, in his March 5 "White History 101," gives a superb analysis, the best I've seen. I hope history teachers will carry this column into their classrooms to help students understand how history gets converted into ideology. My challenge for history teachers and students: Drop the passive voice in describing settlement, slavery and segregation. Name the white criminals who still run the country. Racism is not abstract; it is the daily activity of whites going about business as usual. I publicly thank Gary Younge.

ALAN DOWNES

Sacramento

■ Kudos to Gary Younge! One thought, though. As a Jew, I am proud of the moral stand that led Goodman and Schwerner to the South and take issue with Younge's defining them as "white." I have never thought of myself as white. "White" people generally don't accept me and mine as 100 percent white, and I'm not sure I'm too sad about that. Goodman and Schwerner were certainly not considered white by the bigots who murdered them—how much shall we wager that some anti-Jewish slurs were thrown at them before they were slaughtered?

DAVID ZUCKERMAN

Pittsburgh

■ Rather than learning about James Blake, or Lester Maddox, it might be better if Americans discussed how our leaders distract us with nonissues like who sits where on the bus, or who can marry whom, or what happens to an embryo, instead of focusing on low wages, bad schools or nonexistent healthcare.

James Blake drove a bus through one of the poorest sections of the country. His children went to some of the worst schools in the United States and then on to low-paying nonunion jobs. He was as much a victim of the system as Rosa Parks.

JEAN MARTIN

Reisterstown, Md.

■ It is a measure of my generation's obsession with race that we bend over backward to include blacks in the historical experience, sometimes undeservedly, and still Gary Younge titles his column "White History 101." As for Mr. Blake, he was a bus driver: How many white bus drivers of renown besides the fictitious Ralph Kramden do we know? I only celebrate *American* history, and that includes everybody.

CHIP THORNTON

Atlanta

■ I think the time is right to interview, where possible, those who were actively opposed to the advancement of African-Americans. Let's research and hear from some of the assailants—a "Where Are They Now?" segment, if you will. I think it would be informative and educational, for example, to find the young man who poured milk and flour on, and then commenced to punch and kick, the young man trying to be served a meal. Where is he now? Is he my insurance agent, my banker, my lawyer, my commissioner? What are his thoughts now? Is he remorseful?

RICKY MARTIN

New York City

■ Winston Churchill is credited with the observation that history is written by the victors. Thank you for a thoughtful, moral and courageous argument, compellingly made, for an American history that is not bowdlerized in favor of the victors.

HARRIET A. WASHINGTON

HE'S BLACK! HE'S WHITE! HE'S CLEAN!

Elgin, Ill.

■ Patricia Williams's perspective is so refreshing. Her capacity to review Barack Obama's life situation in many dimensions is welcome ["L'Étranger," March 5]. I have watched as he has grown in Illinois politics. Having voted for John Kennedy as my first presidential vote, I must say that Senator Obama has even more to offer our nation. He chose to be a community organizer in the worst of Chicago neighborhoods. There is nothing more basic and tough than being a community organizer and doing it well.

SANDRA F. TAENZER

letters@thenation.com

Fernandina Beach, Fla.

■ Patricia Williams has written a very insightful piece on Barack Obama, and her analogy of the twinning doll was excellent (I have one of those I found in my attic!). But I must say, although I'm no big Biden fan, that what I thought he meant by his "bright and clean" comment was that Obama is "clean" in the sense of being as yet uncorrupted by Beltway politics. Maybe Biden should have said "fresh," but I immediately knew what he meant by "clean" and didn't feel it as a racial slur at all.

BIA WINTER

Evanston, Ill.

■ It is symptomatic of our obsession with race that Obama has people on both sides of the color line asking if he is "too white" or "too black." How about, Is he human/humane? As a white person who has voted for Harold Washington and Jesse Jackson, I believe the way to move beyond race stereotypes is to discuss them less, not more. I believe race, religion and ethnicity are proxies for class. The same stereotypes, the same jokes are repeated when Sunnis talk about Kurds. Poor people get screwed everywhere. In America a lot of them happen to be black. In the final analysis all issues are economic issues. Divide and conquer is the modus operandi of the ruling class in every society. The less we define ourselves by our differences, the more we can thwart racism, sexism and all other kinds of exploitation.

Last, I am not a former "fucked-up middle-class college student." I am a compassionate human being. I don't think labels, whether from above or below, from left or right, advance any discussion.

CHRIS KRUGER

Washington, DC

■ Lou Reed's rotten lyric with the refrain "I don't wanna be a fucked-up middle-class college student" could sing a different tune. That fucked-up kid wants to be black because black people have depth and gravitas. They have empathy, infectious humor, incredibly strong extended families, a deep abiding faith in a higher power and a way of physically being in their bodies that others admire—not to mention the gift of oration ("he's articulate"), which Obama has inherited. Williams asks whether you can "invert the equation by positing that Barack Obama 'transcended' whiteness because his father was black." My answer is a resounding Yes! Barack Obama *has* transcended his whiteness. By embracing strong black values. Like it or not, whites can claim him as one of their own—and they are proud that he does not embody the values of "fucked-up middle-class" whites.

SIMKI GHEBREMICHAEL

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EDITORIALS

ACT UP at 20

Twenty years ago, a furious speech by the playwright and activist Larry Kramer at New York City's lesbian and gay community center birthed a new activist organization, ACT UP—the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. Within a month, weekly planning meetings were attracting 200 people, a motley mix of gay men, lesbians, recovering addicts with AIDS and the newly diagnosed, a great many of them just in their 20s. Though barely noticed in the pages of this publication, ACT UP would revolutionize AIDS research and treatment, as well as inject new life into the gay movement and infuse the tactic of direct action with its own style of theatrical militancy.

At the time, six years and at least 30,000 American deaths into the epidemic, Ronald Reagan had yet to give a public address on AIDS. Not a single drug was available to treat HIV. Prevention efforts had been left to volunteers and struggling nonprofits. The right's solution was epitomized by William F. Buckley's modest proposal that gay men with HIV have their buttocks tattooed.

For its first action, in March 1987, ACT UP sent some 250 activists to descend on Wall Street. Armed with cardboard tombstones and anti-Reagan posters, they chanted, "Release those drugs," lighting a fire under the Food and Drug Administration and drugmakers to speed up research and approval. Two years later pharma giant Burroughs Wellcome was finally marketing an HIV treatment but had priced it (AZT) at an impossible $8,000 a year. So ACT UP returned to Wall Street, but this time activists didn't just picket. As former bond trader Peter Staley recalls, "We [had] sealed ourselves into one of their corporate offices using high-powered drills. They didn't back down, so we upped the ante by shutting down the New York Stock Exchange, sneaking past security and using foghorns to drown out the opening bell. The company finally lowered the price three days later."

During the years that followed, ACT UP stormed the National Institutes of Health, the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control to protest their shortcomings. On the local level, Catholic dioceses and boards of education were targeted for blocking HIV information in public schools; city governments for failing to provide care and housing; jails and prisons for setting up segregation units. Some ACT UPers set up guerrilla needle-exchange programs; others staked out the entrances to junior highs to distribute condoms directly to students. Just as essentially, ACT UP members became self-taught experts in such arcane fields as virology and patent law and in so doing rewrote the patient-doctor relationship and helped put the idea of universal healthcare—now favored by a majority of Americans—on the political map.

Along the way, ACT UP borrowed strategies from other radical movements: antinuke protesters for techniques on civil disobedience, antiapartheid campaigners for bringing political funerals to the streets. Many of its tactics—videotaping demonstrations as protection against police brutality, coordinated but autonomous affinity group actions—have become standard fare in the global justice movement, as has ACT UP's deeply democratic tradition.

ACT UP is now a shadow of its former self, but its alums have gone on to found Health Gap, a driving force for global treatment access; the Treatment Action Group, which continues to push the AIDS research agenda; and Housing Works, which has won housing for thousands of New York City's HIV-positive homeless. And true to form, the organization will mark its twentieth anniversary with a march on Wall Street March 29 to demand single-payer healthcare for all.

Today, anyone who gains access to an experimental drug before it's approved, or takes a life-saving medicine that was fast-tracked through the FDA—indeed, anyone engaged in the struggle for healthcare—is indebted to ACT UP's audacity and vision.

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COMMENT

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Looking Out for Veterans

After Congressman Bob Filner read the *Washington Post*'s series on the scandalous treatment of injured soldiers at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, he called Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and delivered a simple message: Their party had to fund the wounded warriors as well as the war—or instead of it. For years Filner, a liberal Democrat who represents the military stronghold of San Diego, had been warning that the country's military and veterans hospitals were strained to the breaking point. In the wake of Walter Reed, the public and the party were finally listening. House Democrats added $3.5 billion to an Iraq spending bill to treat brain injuries and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for returning soldiers and upgrade the country's 1,400 deteriorating veterans hospitals. As the new chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Filner is now in a position to translate his advocacy into action. "This is a test for our party," Filner told me during an interview in his Washington office, which looks directly out on the Capitol dome. "Clearly, the Republicans failed. I hope we pass it."

Although he retains the look of a mild-mannered professor (he taught history at San Diego State for twenty-two years), Filner is passionate about his causes. As a student in 1961, he spent two months in a Mississippi jail for civil rights protesting with the Freedom Riders. When the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) lost a laptop containing confidential data on 26 million veterans, Filner interrupted a VA press conference by yelling at two VA officials, "You guys fucked it up!" He called on VA Secretary Jim Nicholson, a former head of the Republican National Committee who's been compared to ex–FEMA chief Michael "Brownie" Brown, to resign. Critics have said that Filner is too emotional. But Tim Walz, a freshman Democrat on Filner's committee who spent twenty-four years in the Minnesota National Guard, disagrees. "As a vet," Walz says, "I want a bulldog there that's fighting for us."

Dr. Bob, as he is known, took an unusual route to his chairmanship. He was in school during the Vietnam War, getting a PhD in the history of science. After teaching, he won a tough race for Congress in 1992 and has fought hard to keep his post, representing a district that's 55 percent Hispanic (a copy of *Spanish for Dummies* sits on his bookshelf). At the same time, San Diego is one of the largest military complexes in the world, and Filner's district abuts two bases. He joined the Veterans Affairs Committee on the advice of former California Senator Alan Cranston, who chaired that committee and whose close ties to veterans allowed him to be as progressive as he wanted on other issues. Filner is very much the same.

Yet veterans aren't giving Filner a grace period, even as they welcome his arrival. The Bush Administration chose to run the "war on terror" expensively abroad and cheaply at home. In 2004, when then–VA chair Chris Smith tried to add $1.3 billion to fully fund VA healthcare, Republicans booted him off the committee. His replacement, hard-line conservative Steve Buyer, was put there, in the words of a top GOP aide, "to tell the

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COMMENT

veterans groups: Enough is enough." This year, the Administration brags that it has produced the largest VA budget in history. That's true—but veterans groups say the $37.1 billion for fiscal year 2008 is not nearly enough to meet the needs of returning servicemen and -women and aging vets. VA hospitals across the country require urgent repair. At least one in four Iraq and Afghanistan vets is suffering from severe mental injury, including PTSD, to say nothing of physical wounds. The VA has a backlog of 600,000 benefit claims, which means veterans can wait years for disability compensation. As Joshua Kors reports in this issue, the Army is discharging maimed Iraq vets with misdiagnosed "personality disorders" in order to deny them such benefits. "We made a contract with these young people: When they join they're gonna get benefits," Filner says. The military "is breaking the contract, and it's just unconscionable."

He's outlined an ambitious agenda to try to correct years of neglect. Filner wants to invest billions of dollars into research and care for severe brain injuries; put issues like mental illness and homelessness into the national consciousness; modernize the GI bill so that it pays for college as it used to; and overhaul VA facilities. He also wants to rethink how the committee performs oversight. In order to prevent another Walter Reed scandal, he'd like to set up a hotline for vets to report mistreatment and send former soldiers to inspect VA hospitals. Instead of simply dragging Administration officials before the committee and berating them, he wants to hold informal roundtable discussions with members of Congress, VA officials, vet advocates and the media.

To accomplish his goals, Filner will have to fight not only Bush and Buyer but members of his own party. Filner's '08 budget request for additional VA healthcare funding was smaller than what vet groups wanted and what the Senate appropriated—the result, he claims, of internal party pressure. If balancing the budget becomes more important than caring for the wounded, Filner says, "all the promises we made over the last decade are going to be hard to keep."

Filner happens to be one of the most liberal members of Congress, a co-founder of the Progressive Caucus and a harsh critic of the Iraq War. Yet he earns kudos from historically conservative organizations like the VFW and the American Legion. "I have a lot of support among traditionally conservative Republicans because of my support for veterans," Filner says. Adds Steve Robertson, legislative director of the American Legion, of Filner, "As a non-vet, he takes the issues of veterans very seriously."

There's a lesson here for fellow Democrats, Filner believes. "People say, 'How can you be for the troops when you're against the war?' Well, here we are, for the troops," he says, voice rising. "When they come home, whether injured mentally or physically, and this Administration doesn't want to deal with them, as a society, we're saying, We need to take these kids in."

ARI BERMAN

Ari Berman, a Nation *contributing writer, is a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute.*

The Loan Shark Lobby

The mid-March collapse of the nation's second-largest subprime mortgage lender caused a panic in the financial markets and sparked calls for regulating the high-interest predatory loans given to those with bad credit. But much of the damage has already been done, with millions of homeowners facing foreclosure at the hands of an industry allowed to run wild.

As its business has exploded—last year subprime loans grew into a $600 billion industry, more than triple the 2002 volume and accounting for one-fifth of all mortgages—the predatory mortgage industry has done its best to make sure Congress wouldn't rein it in, spreading its largesse to Democrats and Republicans: Nearly half of House Financial Services Committee members, including chairman Barney Frank, have received money from New Century Financial Corp., the subprime lender that recently collapsed. Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Chris Dodd, head of the Senate Banking Committee, have been some of the largest beneficiaries of the mortgage banking industry, whose dollars have provided a strong incentive for Congress to sit tight and hope the subprime bubble wouldn't burst.

But it has. According to the Center for Responsible Lending, one out of five subprime mortgages inked in the past two years will end in foreclosure. The losses are staggering: It is estimated that homeowners will collectively be out $164 billion, with millions of families stripped of their most valuable asset.

This was not an unavoidable tragedy. Subprime mortgages prey on the poor, the uninformed and minorities. They offer high-credit-risk clients homeownership at interest rates well above the going rate—above what many can pay. Common sense suggests mortgages shouldn't be sold to those who can't afford them, certainly not in such massive numbers. On March 13 Rep-

SAMI AL-ARIAN

Dr. Sami Al-Arian could die in jail. The Palestinian computer professor is withering away in a North Carolina medical prison, where he was moved on day 24 of a hunger strike he began January 22 [see Alexander Cockburn, "The Persecution of Sami Al-Arian," March 19]. In December 2005 a Florida jury declined to convict Al-Arian of any alleged terrorist activities despite an exhaustive six-month trial that cost the Justice Department an estimated $50 million. So the government has punished him through other means. Last April Al-Arian pled guilty to one charge (a deal he said he accepted only to end the suffering of his family), and the government pledged to release him and let him leave the country. But a judge recently jailed him on contempt charges for refusing to testify in another case—precisely the scenario his plea agreement was supposed to protect him from. The Justice Department must keep its word to Al-Arian and release him. If not, it is responsible for his fate.

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resentative Frank acknowledged as much, saying that "we plan to legislate to restrict those kinds of mortgages going forward."

Such legislation, however, has existed from nearly the beginning of the subprime-lending boom. While millions of homeowners were being mortgaged into ruin, the bills have sat dormant. Part of the reason for that—not surprisingly—might be the money. New Century, for example, which is nearing bankruptcy and under criminal investigation, has profited immensely from the subprime boom; insiders there made $103 million from selling stock. The company has given nearly $700,000 in campaign contributions to legislators since 2004.

And all any of New Century's Congressional patrons had to do was insure that legislation helping consumers didn't gain traction. While it would not necessarily have been a cure-all, it would have gone a long way toward providing safeguards for those targeted by subprime lenders. The most popular legislation, the Prohibit Predatory Lending Act, with nearly seventy co-sponsors, would have required that a borrower receive counseling, would have set limits on fees and prohibited balloon payments, "teaser" rates and lending without taking into account whether the loan could be repaid. It would also have prohibited mandatory arbitration, which most subprime lenders require and which leaves little room for borrowers to seek redress. Representatives Brad Miller and Mel Watt, both North Carolina Democrats, introduced this legislation in 2005 along with Barney Frank, who as ranking committee member failed to gain widespread support for the bill, a version of which is expected to be introduced this year.

Representative Stephanie Tubbs Jones, whose home state of Ohio has among the highest foreclosure rates in the nation, introduced the Predatory Mortgage Lending Practices Reduction Act in 2005, which contained many of the same safeguards. It would also have provided grants for predatory lending education and given the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Federal Reserve and the Federal Trade Commission the ability to define and take action against "unfair or deceptive" lending practices. Tubbs Jones is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, which has strongly supported these measures, since blacks are nearly three times as likely to take out subprime loans. (Representative Dennis Kucinich, also a supporter of Tubbs Jones's bill, opened subprime hearings after the New Century collapse.)

Both bills died after being referred to financial services subcommittees, whose current and former heads have received money from New Century: Representative Paul Kanjorski has seen $42,095; Spencer Bachus, $31,743; and Richard Baker, $7,000.

New Century did take the lead in pushing for some legislation—the Responsible Lending Act, which would have hurt consumers by narrowing the definition of subprime mortgages and pre-empting stricter state laws. The bill's patron saint was Bob Ney, the Ohio Representative now serving a thirty-month federal prison sentence for corruption. New Century has spent more than $1.6 million lobbying in the past three years, and over time has contributed to the campaigns of nearly 60 percent of those who co-sponsored Ney's bill, including $49,300 to Ney himself.

With Democrats in control of Congress, the prospects for meaningful subprime legislation may have improved, but don't hold your breath. When the collapse became front-page news, prominent Democrats, including Hillary Clinton, jumped on the bandwagon calling for Congressional action, but it may be difficult for them to withstand the blandishments of the lobbyists. Mortgage bankers gave 40 percent of their $6.6 million in contributions to Democrats in 2006, before the party gained power, and eleven of the top twenty recipients were Democrats, including the top recipient, Clinton, who took in $108,100. Senator Dodd joined Barney Frank in a vague call for legislation but added that he is "a strong advocate of subprime lending." New Century has given Dodd $15,000 since 2003, and Frank ranked ninth on the list of mortgage banking contributions, with $54,550 in 2006.

Congress now has a decision to make: Should those thousands of dollars be in their pockets, or in those of the millions losing their homes?

GARRETT ORDOWER

Garrett Ordower is an investigative journalist based in New York.

CALVIN TRILLIN

MISTAKES WERE MADE

(A Bush Administration cheer that is adaptable for conditions at Walter Reed, the firings of US Attorneys or four years of war in Iraq)

Mistakes were made, mistakes were made.
The care of our wounded received a bad grade.
The press said our soldiers were grossly betrayed.
It wasn't as bad as they claim.

Mistakes were made, mistakes were made
While purging some US Attorneys if they'd
Not done what our party politicos bade.
But no one we know was to blame.

Mistakes were made, mistakes were made.
And three thousand two hundred people have paid
The ultimate price for a hand not well played.
Our policy's more of the same.

Porn Cop vs. US Attorney

In September 2006, just weeks before pivotal Congressional midterm elections, Paul Charlton, US Attorney for the District of Arizona, opened a preliminary investigation into Rick Renzi, the Republican Congressman representing the state's 1st Congressional District, for an alleged pattern of corruption involving influence peddling and land deals. Almost im-

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COMMENT

mediately, Charlton's name was added to a blacklist of federal prosecutors the White House wanted to force from their jobs. Charlton is someone "we should now consider pushing out," Kyle Sampson, the Attorney General's chief of staff, wrote to Harriet Miers September 13. In his previously safe GOP district, Renzi barely held on in the election. On December 7 the White House demanded Charlton's resignation without offering him any explanation.

Internal Justice Department e-mails subpoenaed by Congress in early March provided evidence that the dismissals of Charlton and seven other federal prosecutors amounted to a political purge aimed in part at protecting Republican lawmakers like Renzi from corruption indictments. The Administration's claim that the ousters were "performance related" has been discredited by the e-mails—and especially proved false in the case of Charlton, whose office was honored with a Federal Service Award in 2002 and was declared a "Model Program" by the Justice Department this past December.

The Justice Department and the White House offered a host of flimsy excuses for firing Charlton, including his insufficient enthusiasm for pursuing the death penalty and prosecuting marijuana cases. Behind the scenes, a Justice Department official named Brent Ward, who claimed in a September 20, 2006, e-mail that Charlton was "unwilling to take good cases," appears to have played a key role in cooking up a pretext for his dismissal.

Who is Brent Ward, and why did he have it in for Charlton?

Ward first came to prominence in Utah, where as a federal prosecutor during the Reagan era he cast himself as a crusader against pornography, going so far as attempting to criminalize nude art-class models. His efforts won him an audience with Attorney General Edwin Meese's Commission on Pornography, which circulated his manifesto calling for relentless prosecutions to "test the limits of pornographers' endurance." Meese then tapped Ward to lead a group of US Attorneys to launch a federal antipornography campaign. Ward returned to government last year as the chief of the Justice Department's newly created Obscenity Prosecution Task Force, where his main achievement has been the prosecution of the producer of the *Girls Gone Wild* video series.

Ward's accomplishments at the Justice Department have been symbolic at best. But when a paper trail to support the charge that US Attorneys were deficient in their performance was required to cover the political dismissals, Justice finally discovered an important use for its top porn cop.

According to a September 20, 2006, e-mail from Ward to Sampson, Charlton was a laggard in prosecuting obscenity cases. The e-mail leveled the same allegation at Dan Bogden, US Attorney for Nevada, who was also dismissed in the prosecutor purge despite positive performance reviews. "We have two U.S. Attorneys who are unwilling to take good cases we have presented to them. They are Paul Charlton in Phoenix (this is urgent) and Dan Bogden in Las Vegas," wrote Ward. But the Justice Department never explained which "good cases" Charlton refused to prosecute, why he refused to prosecute them or whether he even refused the cases.

"The date of the e-mail is subsequent to the date when they asked for [Charlton's] resignation, so it's gratuitous," a former Justice Department source intimately familiar with Charlton's disputed obscenity case told me. "It looks like the White House put this out just to dirty the waters."

According to the source, Ward's accusation against Charlton stems from a case he filed last June. That month Ward ordered Charlton to prosecute Five Star Video, an adult video distributor that registered on Ward's radar when it mailed copies of the DVDs *Gag Factor 18*, *Filthy Things 6*, *Gag Factor 15* and *American Bukkake 13* to customers across state lines. Charlton agreed to the case, but as the source told me, Ward implored him to attach an additional US Attorney to it. Concerned about limited resources, Charlton hesitated before assigning the additional prosecutor—a key fact missing from the White House e-mails.

Ward's endless stream of mandates, the source revealed, were frustrating to many federal prosecutors. "There were countless child obscenity cases crying out to be prosecuted," the source told me, "but Ward wanted to focus on cases involving consenting adults. That's just not a good way of dedicating resources." It was Christian-right organizations like the Family Research Council and Concerned Women for America that had pushed for Ward's Justice Department appointment. Gonzales not only acquiesced but declared the prosecution of pornography portraying sex acts between consenting adults "one of the top priorities" of his department, dedicating ten FBI agents, four prosecutors and a postal inspector to Ward's task force. But while the Christian right's confidence in Gonzales soared, FBI veterans grumbled. "I guess this means we've won the war on terror," an anonymous FBI agent sarcastically remarked to the *Washington Post* about agents diverted to Ward's task force. "We must not need any more resources for espionage."

His antiporn crusades may have rankled the FBI agents and US Attorneys compelled to participate in them, but Ward produced an unintended benefit for the White House when it needed to fire politically "chafing" US Attorneys. Ward's complaint against Charlton, filed away by Sampson, was released by the Justice Department as the Attorneygate scandal raged, smearing a competent professional prosecutor. Whether or not Attorney General Gonzales survives the fallout from his purge, with Ward's help he has fulfilled urgent political goals. Congressman Renzi, once a target of Charlton's investigation, still sits comfortably in his Capitol Hill office, apparently unconcerned about scrutiny of his alleged ethical lapses. MAX BLUMENTHAL

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ON THE WEB: Robert Lipsyte descends into March Madness, exploring how the NCAA Bracket Racket debases athletes and the schools they play for. On the fourth anniversary of the Iraq invasion, Katrina vanden Heuvel measures the impact of lives lost and the damage done to America's security. VideoNation documents Jeremy Scahill's recent investigation for the magazine of Blackwater USA's growing influence in the Pentagon (www.thenation.com).

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ERIC ALTERMAN

The Many Man-Crushes of Chris Matthews

Chris Matthews is not known as a particularly right-wing television talk-show host nor, by the standards of the profession, a particularly foolish one. NBC considers him to be such an asset, it gave him his own Sunday program, in addition to the nightly cable shoutfest *Hardball*.

Within MSNBC, Matthews represents the "center" between the right-wing Tucker Carlson and the taken-for-a-liberal Keith Olbermann. It's worth taking a closer look, therefore, at just what passes for classy, centrist and sane in today's Fox-driven cable cosmos.

Like anyone who spends much time on live TV, Chris Matthews tends to say a lot of silly things. (I did too during the two years I was so employed.) But patterns and passions tell a tale, and those exhibited by Matthews are revealing. Like Elvis, Matthews can't help falling in love. And also like the King—who developed a thing for both Richard Nixon and J. Edgar Hoover late in life—the object of Matthews's affection is invariably a tough-talking, self-styled Republican macho-man. And when he gets going on one of these guys, his style of punditry owes more to, say, *Tiger Beat* or *Teen People* than the Trilateral Commission.

Going back to 9/11, Matthews found himself blown away not by Bush's political or military response but by his ability to throw a baseball. He compared the man to—I kid you not—Ernest Hemingway. "There are some things you can't fake," he explained breathlessly. "Either you can throw a strike from sixty feet or you can't. Either you can rise to the occasion on the mound at Yankee Stadium with 56,000 people watching or you can't. On Tuesday night, George W. Bush hit the strike zone in the House that Ruth Built…. This is about knowing what to do at the moment you have to do it—and then doing it. It's about that 'grace under pressure' that Hemingway gave as his very definition of courage."

And remember that now-infamous Mission Accomplished moment? True, Matthews did not join his guest G. Gordon Liddy in admiring—still not kidding—the President's pretend penis, but he was no less focused on Bush's fashion statements. "He looks great in a military uniform. He looks great in that cowboy costume he wears when he goes West," he cooed. "We're proud of our President. Americans love having a guy as President, a guy who has a little swagger, who's physical, who's not a complicated guy like Clinton…. Women like a guy who's President. Check it out."

Matthews's man-crush on Bush continued longer than that of most of the mainstream media, leading him, for instance, to assert that "everybody sort of likes the President, except for the real whack-jobs," at a moment when the percentage of Americans telling *New York Times*/CBS pollsters that they "liked" Bush had fallen to 37 percent.

But nobody, save Fred Barnes, thinks Bush is cool anymore, and so Matthews has had to go cruising for a new crush. For a while it looked as if he and John McCain would hook up. "A lot of people," he explained coyly, naming no names, "like the cut of John McCain's jib, his independence, his maverick reputation." This led Matthews to declare the election all but over, announcing that as far as he was concerned, McCain "deserves the presidency."

This was just a warmup, however, for Chris's latest flame: the "perfect candidate"—the one who "looks like a President," who "acts and talks like a President," who "rises to the occasion" and is "the one tough cop who was standing on the beat when we got hit last time and stood up and took it," and who, to top it all off, got "that pee smell out of that subway." Say one thing about Chris Matthews, once he switches loyalties, he's really loyal. He got so mad at that meanie Hillary Clinton for wanting to be President against his new love, Rudy G, he gave a big fat warning to her homies about her husband. Again, I promise I'm not kidding. When Hillary staffer Ann Lewis showed up on *Hardball*, she was instructed three times by its host that Bill Clinton had "better watch it." And when former DNC chair Terry McAuliffe came on to promote his book, Matthews told him six times that Clinton had better "behave himself," lest his "social life" become a "distraction."

Just what so worried Matthews could only be inferred, as he was, like, too shy to say what he really meant. It's possible his concern was sartorial in nature, as the candidates' clothing has proven a Matthews obsession in presidential elections past. In 1999, for instance, he grew obsessed with Al Gore's suit buttons. "What could that possibly be saying to women voters, three buttons?" he asked a guest. "Is there some hidden Freudian deal here or what? I don't know, I mean, Navy guys used to have buttons on their pants." Indeed, Matthews thought the button development so significant, he returned to it five nights in a row.

Certainly Matthews couldn't have meant Bill Clinton's sex life. First off, it's Hillary who's running this time. And when it comes to screwing around while in office, well, the ex-President is the proverbial *pisher* compared with Mr. Pee Smell Out of the Subway. While serving as Mayor of New York, Rudy moved in with a couple of gay guys to facilitate cheating on his wife, and let the mother of his children know he wanted a divorce by holding a press conference. This led Mrs. Giuliani (Donna Hanover) to complain about yet another affair he'd apparently conducted with a member of his staff and to seek a restraining order to keep his new girlfriend (now wife) out of Gracie Mansion.

One would think, as my colleague at Media Matters Jamison Foser has so sagely noted, "On the distraction scale, that would have to rate pretty darn high."

Can this romance be saved? Too early to tell, but perhaps Rudy shouldn't be picking out silverware patterns just yet. The race is still wide open. Newt's got that handsome head of hair, and Fred Thompson, well, the guy is practically George Clooney—for a Republican. And hey, let's not forget Mitt Romney. He may not be a credible conservative or even (really) a Christian, but according to Chris, "He's got a great chin, I've noticed." ■

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NAOMI KLEIN

Class War in Conrad's Court

During the jury selection process at the Conrad Black fraud trial in Chicago, the judge polled potential jurors on their impressions of Black's home, Canada. "Socialist country," one replied. According to press accounts, Black, once the third-most-powerful press baron in the world, turned to his wife, Barbara Amiel, and they shared a smile. At last, a juror after their own hearts—the couple had been redbaiting Canadians for years.

The Black trial is an odd beast: A Canadian who gave up his citizenship to be a British Lord is on trial in the United States for allegedly pocketing tens of millions that belonged to the shareholders of Chicago-based Hollinger International. Every twist is front-page international news, but most Americans have no idea who Black is. In his opening remarks, Black's lawyer Edward Genson assured the jury, "In his native Canada and England, he's a household name."

It makes sense that Lord Black is a nobody in Chicago. Black never needed to bother with politics in the United States—as far as he was concerned, the country was close to perfect. It was the rest of the English-speaking world that required Black's bombastic ideological lectures. Delivering those was his life's mission.

Black is the world's leading advocate of the "Anglosphere," a movement calling for the creation of a bloc of English-speaking countries. Adherents claim that the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand must join together against the Muslim world and anyone else who poses a threat. For Black, the United States is not just the obvious leader of the Anglosphere but the economic and military model that all Anglo countries should emulate, as opposed to the soft European Union.

Although the consolidation of the Anglosphere as a political bloc receives far less scrutiny than US military interventions, it has been a crucial plank of Washington's imperial projects. The movement recently gained some notoriety when it emerged that on February 28, the White House had hosted a "literary luncheon" for George W. Bush's and Dick Cheney's new favorite writer, ultraright British historian Andrew Roberts, author of *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900*, an Anglosphere manifesto. But it is Black who has been the linchpin of Anglosphere campaigns for two decades, using his British and Canadian newspapers to reach out and collectively hug his beloved United States. In Britain this took the form of using the *Daily Telegraph* as a beachhead against "euro-integrationism" and insisting that Britain's future lies not with the EU but with Washington. This vision reaches its zenith, of course, with the Bush-Blair team-up in Iraq.

In Canada, where Black controlled roughly half the daily newspapers, the push to Americanize was even more strident. When Black founded the daily *National Post* in 1998, it was with the explicit goal of weaning Canadians from our social safety net (a "hammock") and forming a new party of the "united right" to unseat the governing Liberals.

So, if Black was going to get a sympathetic jury anywhere, it should have been in the United States, where regular people worship the wealthy because they are convinced they could be the next to strike it rich (unlike those envious, over-taxed and -regulated Europeans and Canadians). Perhaps in 2000, at the height of the stock market bubble, Black would have faced a jury made up of such supportive folks, ones who would have looked at his uncanny ability to divert Hollinger profits into his own accounts and said, "More power to you." But in 2007 Black came face to face with the casualties of the boom's collapse and of the ideological revolution he so aggressively globalized. As the judge questioned a pool of 140 prospective jurors in order to whittle the group down to twelve, plus eight alternates, she found men and women who had "lost every dime" in the WorldCom collapse, whose pensions had evaporated on the stock market, who had been fired thanks to outsourcing and who'd had their finances ravaged by identity theft.

Asked what they thought of executives who earn tens of millions of dollars, jurors answered almost uniformly in the negative. "Who could possibly do that much work or be that much capable?" one asked. A union mechanic's apprentice pointed out that no matter how much he works, "I'm barely getting by as it is, living at home." No one said "more power to you."

Many appeared to regard North America's ultrarich the way Russians see their oligarchs—even if the way they amassed their fortunes was legal, it shouldn't have been. "I just don't think anyone should get that amount of money from any company, example Enron and WorldCom," one juror wrote. Others said, "I feel that there is corruption everywhere"; anyone paid as much as Black "probably stole it"; "I am sure this goes on all the time and I hope they get caught." John Tien, a 40-year-old accountant at Boeing, launched into such an elaborate lecture about the accounting scams endemic in corporate America that Black's lawyers asked the judge to question him in private, to prevent his views from influencing the other potential jurors.

Regardless of what else happens in the Black saga, the jury-selection process has already provided an extraordinary window onto the way regular Americans, randomly selected, view their elites—not as heroes but as thieves. As far as Black is concerned, this is all terribly unfair—he is being "thrown to the mobs" because of rage at the system and, unlike American billionaires, he doesn't "dress in corduroy trousers" or donate his fortune to AIDS charities. Black's lawyers even argued (unsuccessfully) that their client could not get a fair trial because the average Chicagoan "does not reside in more than one residence, employ servants or a chauffeur, enjoy lavish furniture, or host expensive parties."

There is no doubt that what is going on in that courtroom looks less like a fraud trial than class war, one at the heart of the Anglosphere. Even if Black wins, it will be harder to sell the world an ideological model that is so deeply reviled at home. ■

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ARTICLES

How Specialist Town Lost His Benefits

JOSHUA KORS

Jon Town has spent the last few years fighting two battles, one against his body, the other against the US Army. Both began in October 2004 in Ramadi, Iraq. He was standing in the doorway of his battalion's headquarters when a 107-millimeter rocket struck two feet above his head. The impact punched a piano-sized hole in the concrete facade, sparked a huge fireball and tossed the 25-year-old Army specialist to the floor, where he lay blacked out among the rubble.

Spc. Jon Town with his wife, Kristy, their daughter, Hailey, and their son, Shain

"The next thing I remember is waking up on the ground." Men from his unit had gathered around his body and were screaming his name. "They started shaking me. But I was numb all over," he says. "And it's weird because… because for a few minutes you feel like you're not really there. I could see them, but I couldn't hear them. I couldn't hear anything. I started shaking because I thought I was dead."

Eventually the rocket shrapnel was removed from Town's neck and his ears stopped leaking blood. But his hearing never really recovered, and in many ways, neither has his life. A soldier honored twelve times during his seven years in uniform, Town has spent the last three struggling with deafness, memory failure and depression. By September 2006 he and the Army agreed he was no longer combat-ready.

But instead of sending Town to a medical board and discharging him because of his injuries, doctors at Fort Carson, Colorado, did something strange: They claimed Town's wounds were actually caused by a "personality disorder." Town was then booted from the Army and told that under a personality disorder discharge, he would never receive disability or medical benefits.

Town is not alone. A six-month investigation has uncovered multiple cases in which soldiers wounded in Iraq are suspiciously diagnosed as having a personality disorder, then prevented from collecting benefits. The conditions of their discharge have infuriated many in the military community, including the injured soldiers and their families, veterans' rights groups, even military officials required to process these dismissals.

They say the military is purposely misdiagnosing soldiers like Town and that it's doing so for one reason: to cheat them out of a lifetime of disability and medical benefits, thereby saving billions in expenses.

The Fine Print

In the Army's separations manual it's called Regulation 635-200, Chapter 5-13: "Separation Because of Personality Disorder." It's an alluring choice for a cash-strapped military because enacting it is quick and cheap. The Department of Veterans Affairs doesn't have to provide medical care to soldiers dismissed with personality disorder. That's because under Chapter 5-13, personality disorder is a pre-existing condition. The VA is only required to treat wounds sustained during service.

Soldiers discharged under 5-13 can't collect disability pay either. To receive those benefits, a soldier must be evaluated by a medical board, which must confirm that he is wounded and that his wounds stem from combat. The process takes several months, in contrast with a 5-13 discharge, which can be wrapped up in a few days.

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If a soldier dismissed under 5-13 hasn't served out his contract, he has to give back a slice of his re-enlistment bonus as well. That amount is often larger than the soldier's final paycheck. As a result, on the day of their discharge, many injured vets learn that they owe the Army several thousand dollars.

One military official says doctors at his base are doing more than withholding this information from wounded soldiers; they're actually telling them the opposite: that if they go along with a 5-13, they'll get to keep their bonus and receive disability and medical benefits. The official, who demanded anonymity, handles discharge papers at a prominent Army facility. He says the soldiers he works with know they don't have a personality disorder. "But the doctors are telling them, this will get you out quicker, and the VA will take care of you. To stay out of Iraq, a soldier will take that in a heartbeat. What they don't realize is, those things are lies. The soldiers, they don't read the fine print," he says. "They don't know to ask for a med board. They're taking the word of the doctors. Then they sit down with me and find out what a 5-13 really means—they're shocked."

Right now the Army is eating its own. These soldiers need help instead of being thrown to the wolves, says one Army lawyer.

Russell Terry, founder of the Iraq War Veterans Organization (IWVO), says he's watched this scenario play itself out many times. For more than a year, his veterans' rights group has been receiving calls from distraught soldiers discharged under Chapter 5-13. Most, he says, say their military doctors pushed the personality disorder diagnosis, strained to prove that their problems existed before their service in Iraq and refused to acknowledge evidence of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury and physical traumas, which would allow them to collect disability and medical benefits.

"These soldiers are coming home from Iraq with all kinds of problems," Terry says. "They go to the VA for treatment, and they're turned away. They're told, 'No, you have a pre-existing condition, something from childhood.'" That leap in logic boils Terry's blood. "Everybody receives a psychological screening when they join the military. What I want to know is, if all these soldiers really did have a severe pre-existing condition, how did they get into the military in the first place?"

Terry says that trying to reverse a 5-13 discharge is a frustrating process. A soldier has to claw through a thicket of paperwork, appeals panels and backstage political dealing, and even with the guidance of an experienced advocate, few are successful. "The 5-13," he says, "it's like a scarlet letter you can't get taken off."

In the last six years the Army has diagnosed and discharged more than 5,600 soldiers because of personality disorder, according to the Defense Department. And the numbers keep rising: 805 cases in 2001, 980 cases in 2003, 1,086 from January to November 2006. "It's getting worse and worse every day," says the official who handles discharge papers. "At my office the numbers started out normal. Now it's up to three or four soldiers each day. It's like, suddenly everybody has a personality disorder."

The reason is simple, he says. "They're saving a buck. And they're saving the VA money too. It's all about money."

Exactly how much money is difficult to calculate. Defense Department records show that across the entire armed forces, more than 22,500 soldiers have been dismissed due to personality disorder in the last six years. How much those soldiers would have collected in disability pay would have been determined by a medical board, which evaluates just how disabled a veteran is. A completely disabled soldier receives about $44,000 a year. In a recent study on the cost of veterans' benefits for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, Harvard professor Linda Bilmes estimates an average disability payout of $8,890 per year and a future life expectancy of forty years for soldiers returning from service.

Using those figures, by discharging soldiers under Chapter 5-13, the military could be saving upwards of $8 billion in disability pay. Add to that savings the cost of medical care over the soldiers' lifetimes. Bilmes estimates that each year the VA spends an average of $5,000 in medical care per veteran. Applying those numbers, by discharging 22,500 soldiers because of personality disorder, the military saves $4.5 billion in medical care over their lifetimes.

Town says Fort Carson psychologist Mark Wexler assured him that he would receive disability benefits, VA medical care and that he'd get to keep his bonus—good news he discussed with Christian Fields and Brandon Murray, two soldiers in his unit at Fort Carson. "We talked about it many times," Murray says. "Jon said the doctor there promised him benefits, and he was happy about it. Who wouldn't be?" Town shared that excitement with his wife, Kristy, shortly after his appointment with Wexler. "He said that Wexler had explained to him that he'd get to keep his benefits," Kristy says, "that the doctor had looked into it, and it was all coming with the chapter he was getting."

In fact, Town would not get disability pay or receive long-term VA medical care. And he would have to give back the bulk of his $15,000 bonus. Returning that money meant Town would leave Fort Carson less than empty-handed: He now owed the Army more than $3,000. "We had this on our heads the whole way, driving home to Ohio," says Town. Wexler made him promises, he says, about what would happen if he went along with the diagnosis. "The final day, we find out, none of it was true. It was a total shock. I felt like I'd been betrayed by the Army."

Wexler denies discussing benefits with Town. In a statement, the psychologist writes, "I have never discussed benefits with my patients as that is not my area of expertise. The only thing I said to Spc. Town was that the Chapter 5-13 is an honorable discharge.… I assure you, after over 15 years in my position, both as active duty and now civilian, I don't presume to know all the details about benefits and therefore do not discuss them with my patients."

Wexler's boss, Col. Steven Knorr, chief of the Department of Behavioral Health at Evans Army Hospital, declined to speak about Town's case. When asked if doctors at Fort Carson were assuring patients set for a 5-13 discharge that they'll receive disability benefits and keep their bonuses, Knorr said, "I don't believe they're doing that."

Joshua Kors is a freelance journalist based in New York. *Research support was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

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'Not the Man He Used to Be'

Interviews with soldiers diagnosed with personality disorder suggest that the military is using the psychological condition as a catch-all diagnosis, encompassing symptoms as diverse as deafness, headaches and schizophrenic delusions. That flies in the face of the Army's own regulations.

According to those regulations, to be classified a personality disorder, a soldier's symptoms had to exist before he joined the military. And they have to match the "personality disorder" described in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, the national standard for psychiatric diagnosis. Town's case provides a clear window into how these personality disorder diagnoses are being used because even a cursory examination of his case casts grave doubt as to whether he fits either criterion.

Town's wife, for one, laughs in disbelief at the idea that her husband was suffering from hearing loss before he headed to Iraq. But since returning, she says, he can't watch TV unless the volume is full-blast, can't use the phone unless its volume is set to high. Medical papers from Fort Carson list Town as having no health problems before serving in Iraq; after, a Fort Carson audiologist documents "functional (non-organic) hearing loss." Town says his right ear, his "good" ear, has lost 50 percent of its hearing; his left is still essentially useless.

He is more disturbed by how his memory has eroded. Since the rocket blast, he has struggled to retain new information. "Like, I'll be driving places, and then I totally forget where I'm going," he says. "Numbers, names, dates—unless I knew them before, I pretty much don't remember." When Town returned to his desk job at Fort Carson, he found himself straining to recall the Army's regulations. "People were like, 'What are you, dumb?' And I'm like, 'No, I'm probably smarter than you. I just can't remember stuff,'" he says, his melancholy suddenly replaced by anger. "They don't understand—I got hit by a rocket."

Those bursts of rage mark the biggest change, says Kristy Town. She says the man she married four years ago was "a real goofball. He'd do funny voices and faces—a great Jim Carrey imitation. When the kids would get a boo-boo, he'd fall on the ground and pretend he got a boo-boo too." Now, she says, "his emotions are all over the place. He'll get so angry at things, and it's not toward anybody. It's toward himself. He blames himself for everything." He has a hard time sleeping and doesn't spend as much time as he used to with the kids. "They get rowdy when they play, and he just has to be alone. It's almost like his nerves can't handle it."

Kristy begins to cry, pauses, before forcing herself to continue. She's been watching him when he's alone, she says. "He kind of… zones out, almost like he's in a daze."

In May 2006 Town tried to electrocute himself, dropping his wife's hair dryer into the bathtub. The dryer short-circuited before it could electrify the water. Fort Carson officials put Town in an off-post hospital that specializes in suicidal depression. Town had been promoted to corporal after returning from Iraq; he was stripped of that rank and reduced back to specialist. "When he came back, I tried to be the same," Kristy says. "He just can't. He's definitely not the man he used to be."

Town says his dreams have changed too. They keep taking him back to Ramadi, to the death of a good friend who'd been too near an explosion, taken too much shrapnel to the face. In his dreams Town returns there night after night to soak up the blood.

He stops his description for a rare moment of levity. "Sleep didn't use to be like that," he says. "I used to sleep just fine."

How the Army determined then that Town's behavioral problems existed before his military service is unclear. Wexler, the Fort Carson psychologist who made the diagnosis, didn't interview any of Town's family or friends. It's unclear whether he even questioned Town's fellow soldiers in 2-17 Field Artillery, men like Fields, Murray and Michael Forbus, who could have testified to his stability and award-winning performance before the October 2004 rocket attack. As Forbus puts it, before the attack Town was "one of the best in our unit"; after, "the son of a gun was deaf in one ear. He seemed lost and disoriented. It just took the life out of him."

Town finds his diagnosis especially strange because the Diagnostic Manual appears to preclude cases like his. It says that a pattern of erratic behavior cannot be labeled a "personality disorder" if it's from a head injury. The specialist asserts that his hearing loss, headaches and anger all began with the rocket attack that knocked him unconscious.

Wexler did not reply to repeated requests seeking comment on Town's diagnosis. But Col. Knorr of Fort Carson's Evans hospital says he's confident his doctors are properly diagnosing personality disorder. The colonel says there is a simple explanation as to why in so many cases the lifelong condition of personality disorder isn't apparent until after serving in Iraq. Traumatic experiences, Knorr says, can trigger a condition that has lain dormant for years. "They may have done fine in high school and before, but it comes out during the stress of service."

"I've never heard of that occurring," says Keith Armstrong, a clinical professor with the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco. Armstrong has been counseling traumatized veterans for more than twenty years at the San Francisco VA; most recently he is the co-author of *Courage After Fire: Coping Strategies for Troops Returning From Iraq and Afghanistan and Their Families*. "Personality disorder is a diagnosis I'm very cautious about," he says. "My question would be, has PTSD been ruled out? It seems to me that if it walks like a duck, looks like a duck, let's see if it's a duck before other factors are implicated."

Knorr admits that in most cases, before making a diagnosis, his doctors only interview the soldier. But he adds that interviewing family members, untrained to recognize signs of personality disorder, would be of limited value. "The soldier's perception and their parents' perception is that they were fine. But maybe they didn't or weren't able to see that wasn't the case."

Armstrong takes a very different approach. He says family is a "crucial part" of the diagnosis and treatment of soldiers returning from war. The professor sees parents and wives as so important, he encourages his soldiers to invite their families into the counseling sessions. "They bring in particular information that can be helpful," he says. "By not taking advantage of their knowledge and support, I think we're doing soldiers a disservice."

Knorr would not discuss the specifics of Town's case. He did note, however, that his department treats thousands of soldiers

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Professor William Kloss is an independent art historian and frequent lecturer for the Smithsonian Institution's seminar and travel program. He has served on the Committee for the Preservation of the White House by presidential appointment since 1990, and he is the author of several books and exhibition catalogs.

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each year and says within that population, there are bound to be a small fraction of misdiagnosed cases and dissatisfied soldiers. He adds that the soldiers he's seen diagnosed and discharged with personality disorder are "usually quite pleased."

The Army holds soldiers' medical records and contact information strictly confidential. But *The Nation* was able to locate a half-dozen soldiers from bases across the country who were diagnosed with personality disorder. All of them rejected that diagnosis. Most said military doctors tried to force the diagnosis upon them and turned a blind eye to symptoms of PTSD and physical injury.

One such veteran, Richard Dykstra, went to the hospital at Fort Stewart, Georgia, complaining of flashbacks, anger and stomach pains. The doctor there diagnosed personality disorder. Dykstra thinks the symptoms actually stem from PTSD and a bilateral hernia he suffered in Iraq. "When I told her my symptoms, she said, 'Oh, it looks like you've been reading up on PTSD.' Then she basically said I was making it all up," he says.

In her report on Dykstra, Col. Ana Parodi, head of Behavioral Health at Fort Stewart's Winn Army Hospital, writes that the soldier gives a clear description of PTSD symptoms but lays them out with such detail, it's "as if he had memorized the criteria." She concludes that Dykstra has personality disorder, not PTSD, though her report also notes that Dykstra has had "no previous psychiatric history" and that she confirmed the validity of his symptoms with the soldier's wife.

Parodi is currently on leave and could not be reached for comment. Speaking for Fort Stewart, Public Affairs Officer Lieut. Col. Randy Martin says that the Army's diagnosis procedures "have been developed over time, and they are accepted as being fair." Martin said he could not address Dykstra's case specifically because his files have been moved to a storage facility in St. Louis.

William Wooldridge had a similar fight with the Army. The specialist was hauling missiles and tank ammunition outside Baghdad when, he says, a man standing at the side of the road grabbed hold of a young girl and pushed her in front of his truck. "The little girl," Wooldridge says, his voice suddenly quiet, "she looked like one of my daughters."

When he returned to Fort Polk, Louisiana, Wooldridge told his doctor that he was now hearing voices and seeing visions, hallucinations of a mangled girl who would ask him why he had killed her. His doctor told him he had personality disorder. "When I heard that, I flew off the handle because I said, 'Hey, that ain't me. Before I went over there, I was a happy-go-lucky kind of guy.'" Wooldridge says his psychologist, Capt. Patrick Brady of Baynes-Jones Army Community Hospital, saw him for thirty minutes before making his diagnosis. Soon after, Wooldridge was discharged from Fort Polk under Chapter 5-13.

He began to fight that discharge immediately, without success. Then in March 2005, eighteen months after Wooldridge's dismissal, his psychiatrist at the Memphis VA filed papers rejecting Brady's diagnosis and asserting that Wooldridge suffered from PTSD so severe, it made him "totally disabled." Weeks later the Army Discharge Review Board voided Wooldridge's 5-13 dismissal, but the eighteen months he'd spent lingering without benefits had already taken its toll.

"They put me out on the street to rot, and if I had left things like they were, there would have been no way I could have survived. I would have had to take myself out or had someone do it for me," he says. The way they use personality disorder to diagnose and discharge, he says, "it's like a mental rape. That's the only way I can describe it."

Captain Brady has since left Fort Polk and is now on staff at Fort Wainwright, Alaska; recently he deployed to Iraq and was unavailable for comment. In a statement, Maj. Byron Strother, chief of the Department of Behavioral Health at Baynes-Jones hospital, writes that allegations that soldiers at Fort Polk are being misdiagnosed "are not true." Strother says diagnoses at his hospital are made "only after careful consideration of all relevant clinical observation, direct examination [and] appropriate testing."

If there are dissatisfied soldiers, says Knorr, the Fort Carson official, "I'll bet not a single one of them has been diagnosed with conditions that are clear-cut and makes them medically unfit, like schizophrenia."

Linda Mosier disputes that. When her son Chris left for Iraq in 2004, he was a "normal kid," she says, who'd call her long-distance and joke about the strange food and expensive taxis overseas. When he returned home for Christmas 2005, "he wouldn't sit down for a meal with us. He just kept walking around. I took him to the department store for slacks, and he was inside rushing around saying, 'Let's go, let's go, let's go.' He wouldn't sleep, and the one time he did, he woke up screaming."

Mosier told his mother of a breaking point in Iraq: a roadside bomb that blew up the truck in front of his. "He said his buddies were screaming. They were on fire," she says, her voice trailing off. "He was there at the end to pick up the hands and arms." After that Mosier started having delusions. Dr. Wexler of Fort Carson diagnosed personality disorder. Soon after, Mosier was discharged under Chapter 5-13.

Mosier returned home, still plagued by visions. In October he put a note on the front door of their Des Moines, Iowa, home saying the Iraqis were after him and he had to protect the family, then shot himself.

Mosier's mother is furious that doctors at Fort Carson treated her son for such a brief period of time and that Wexler, citing confidentiality, refused to tell her anything about that treatment or give her family any direction on how to help Chris upon his return home. She does not believe her son had a personality disorder. "They take a normal kid, he comes back messed up, then nobody was there for him when he came back," Linda says. "They discharged him so they didn't have to treat him."

Wexler did not reply to a written request seeking comment on Mosier's case.

'Thrown to the Wolves'

Today Jon Town is home, in small-town Findlay, Ohio, with no job, no prospects and plenty of time to reflect on how he got there. Diagnosing him with personality disorder may have saved the Army thousands of dollars, he says, but what did Wexler have to gain?

Quite a lot, says Steve Robinson, director of veterans affairs at Veterans for America, a Washington, DC–based soldiers'

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rights group. Since the Iraq War began, he says, doctors have been facing an overflow of wounded soldiers and a shortage of rooms, supplies and time to treat them. By calling PTSD a personality disorder, they usher one soldier out quickly, freeing up space for the three or four who are waiting.

Terry, the veterans' advocate from IWVO, notes that unlike doctors in the private sector, Army doctors who give questionable diagnoses face no danger of malpractice suits due to *Feres v. U.S.*, a 1950 Supreme Court ruling that bars soldiers from suing for negligence. To maintain that protection, Terry says, most doctors will diagnose personality disorder when prodded to do so by military officials.

That's precisely how the system works, says one military official familiar with the discharge process. The official, who requested anonymity, is a lawyer with Trial Defense Services (TDS), a unit of the Army that guides soldiers through their 5-13 discharge. "Commanders want to get these guys out the door and get it done fast. Even if the next soldier isn't as good, at least he's good to go. He's deployable. So they're telling the docs what diagnosis to give to get what discharge."

The lawyer says he knows this is happening because commanders have told him that they're doing it. "Some have come to me and talked about doing this. They're saying, 'Give me a specific diagnosis. It'll support a certain chapter.'"

Colonel Martin of Fort Stewart said the prospect of commanders pressuring doctors to diagnose personality disorder is "highly unlikely." "Doctors are making these determinations themselves," Martin says. In a statement, Col. William Statz, commander at Fort Polk's Baynes-Jones hospital, says, "Any allegations that clinical decisions are influenced by either political considerations or command pressures, at any level, are untrue."

But a second TDS lawyer, who also demanded anonymity, says he's watched the same process play out at his base. "What I've noticed is right before a unit deploys, we see a spike in 5-13s, as if the commanders are trying to clean house, get rid of the soldiers they don't really need," he says. "The chain of command just wants to eliminate them and get a new body in there fast to plug up the holes." If anyone shows even moderate signs of psychological distress, he says, "they're kicking them to the curb instead of treating them."

Both lawyers say that once a commander steps in and pushes for a 5-13, the diagnosis and discharge are carved in stone fairly fast. After that happens, one lawyer says he points soldiers toward the Army Board for Correction of Military Records, where a 5-13 label could be overturned, and failing that, advises them to seek redress from their representative in Congress. Town did that, contacting Republican Representative Michael Oxley of Ohio, with little success. Oxley, who has since retired, did not return calls seeking comment.

Few cases are challenged successfully or overturned later, say the TDS lawyers. The system, says one, is essentially broken. "Right now, the Army is eating its own. What I want to see is these soldiers getting the right diagnosis, so they can get the right help, not be thrown to the wolves right away. That is what they're doing."

Still, Town tries to remain undaunted. He got his story to Robinson of Veterans for America, who brought papers on his case to an October meeting with several top Washington

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officials, including Deputy Surgeon General Gale Pollock, Assistant Surgeon General Bernard DeKoning and Republican Senator Kit Bond of Missouri. There Robinson laid out the larger 5-13 problem and submitted a briefing specifically on Town.

"We got a very positive response," Robinson says. "After we presented, they were almost appalled, like we are every day. They said, 'We didn't know this was happening.'" Robinson says the deputy surgeon general promised to look into Town's case and the others presented to her. Senator Bond, whose son has served in Iraq, floated the idea of a Congressional hearing if the 5-13 issue isn't resolved. The senator did not return calls seeking comment.

In the meantime, Town is doing his best to keep his head in check. He says his nightmares have been waning in recent weeks, but most of his problems persist. He's thinking of going to a veterans support group in Toledo, forty-five miles north of Findlay. There will be guys there who have been through this, he says, vets who understand.

Town hesitates, his voice suddenly much softer. "I have my good days and my bad days," he says. "It all depends on whether I wake up in Findlay or Iraq." ■

LEARNING FROM THE GOLDEN STATE'S MISTAKES, AND SUCCESSES, WITH IMMIGRATION.

As California Goes…

PETER SCHRAG

The contention that California is the nation's bellwether is so common that you want to argue with it—and of late many have, contending that the state is now too Democratic, too liberal socially, too rabidly environmentalist to be a national trend setter. But in its demographic patterns, on immigration and related issues, California's experience in the past fifteen years has run a course that eerily foreshadows today's bitter national immigration debate. In particular, the way California, with its unprecedented ethnic diversity, now manages its social and economic challenges, and the way immigrants assimilate, is almost certain to be a crucial test for the nation and, very likely, for the rest of the world.

RYAN INZANA

Demographically, what California was a generation ago, America is now; what California is, America is likely to become. The Golden State, for all its reputed liberalism and its rapid Hispanicization, may not be so different from the rest of the nation, just a generation or two ahead of it. And the score so far is not nearly as dismal as the nation's rabid immigration opponents think it is. It may even be surprising.

The most obvious element in the story is demographic. As recently as 1960, 80 percent of Californians were Anglo whites; in that year, the most common native language of California immigrants, the largest number of whom came from Britain or Canada, was English. Just forty years later, California, the world's seventh- or eighth-largest economy, became America's first large minority-majority state. Currently, according to the state's demographers, roughly 41 percent of California's 37 million residents are Anglos (what the census calls non-Hispanic whites), 37 percent are Latinos, 12 percent are Asians and 6 percent are African-Americans. About 27 percent of California residents are immigrants, the vast majority of them from Latin America or Asia. One-fourth of its schoolchildren come from a home where students are studying English as a foreign language. In another generation Latinos will be an absolute majority, and there will be 2 million fewer non-Hispanic whites than there are now.

That picture isn't all that different from what the nation will be. By 2050, according to Census projections, the US population will look very much like California's in the late 1990s. It will be barely half Anglo. Hispanics, now already the largest minority in the country, will constitute 24 percent, blacks 15 percent and Asians 8 percent. Today Texas is already a minority-majority state, and others will soon follow.

The ethnic numbers are hardly certain, especially since the sharply increasing rate of intermarriage among Anglos, Hispanics and Asians (themselves overgeneralized statistical conglomerates) fuzzes up all future ethnic distinctions. Those uncertainties are already apparent in a browning California, where it's increasingly hard to tell who's what, either from names or complexion or cultural proclivities. The children now born in California, says essayist Richard Rodriguez, don't look like—or talk like—their grandparents. What's certain is that as the country's baby boomers retire, the nation, like California, will be increasingly dependent on today's immigrants and their children for its labor force, a labor force that will have to support almost twice as many retirees per worker as it does today.

Given California's—and America's—historic ambivalence about immigrants, it's hardly surprising that a demographic change of the magnitude that California has experienced since 1960 would generate backlash. It was indirect at first, with the severe tax limitations of Proposition 13 in 1978 and a string of other tax and spending limits (all those illegal immigrants, said Howard Jarvis, the chief sponsor of Prop 13, "just come here to get on the taxpayers' gravy train") then with Proposition 187 in 1994, an initiative that sought to deny all undocumented resi-

Peter Schrag is a weekly columnist with the Sacramento Bee. *His most recent book is* California: America's High-Stakes Experiment *(University of California).*

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dents access to public schools and the few other public services they were still eligible for. The measure also ordered physicians, nurses, teachers and other public officials to report any undocumented person who sought services to California law-enforcement authorities or federal immigration officers.

Most provisions of Prop 187 were quickly blocked, and eventually overturned, by the federal courts. But the initiative, foreshadowing scores of current federal, state and local attempts to deny services and driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants, to shut them out of rental housing and round them up, nonetheless continues to have major political reverberations. Even before it passed, thousands of legal Latino residents, many of them beneficiaries of the amnesty enacted by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, had begun to apply for US citizenship. And since Prop 187 was loudly backed by Republican Governor Pete Wilson, then running for re-election—his TV ads showed shadowy figures running across a freeway to the refrain "They keep coming"—most registered as Democrats the moment they got it.

The year 1994, when Prop 187 passed (by 59 to 41 percent), is a telling baseline. California now—the emerging California on the ground, its people, economics and culture—is a radically different place from what it was then, and even more different from what it was thirty years ago. It's unlikely that the state would pass another Prop 187 (although a group of Republican troglodytes is trying to get one on the 2008 ballot). In a poll in January by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), 56 percent approved of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposal to cover all children, including those here illegally, in a state health plan. And a poll last September showed that 58 percent of California adults regarded immigrants as more of an asset to the state than a burden on public services; 35 percent said they were more of a burden. Sixty-five percent of those polled said illegal immigrants should be allowed to stay and apply for work permits.

Those numbers appear to reflect a growing acceptance, especially by the younger generation, of an altogether new California with a browning complexion and a wide spectrum of new economic and cultural features. The vast majority of second-generation Latinos speak English, and in the third generation almost no one knows the "native" language. California's Latino legislators (twenty-eight of 120 members in the two houses, a higher percentage than Latinos in the electorate) exercise formidable power in such things as university admission policies and education policy generally. California now also has the first Vietnamese-born legislator in the United States, a Republican.

More important, a major new PPIC study, concurring with earlier research, indicates that new immigrants don't take jobs from native-born Americans, even those with low skills. On the contrary, in the years between 1990 and 2004, years of spiking immigration, immigrants boosted the economy and "induced a 4 percent real wage increase for the average native worker." More than half of the new Silicon Valley start-ups in recent years (1999–2005) have at least one foreign-born founder; for California as a whole it's 39 percent. There are now some 600,000 Latino-owned California businesses; 55 percent of long-term Latino immigrants own their own homes, almost the same

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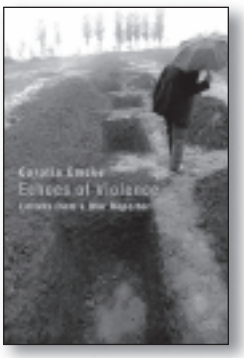

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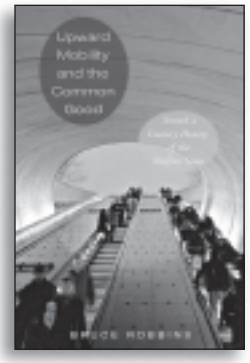

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percentage as for the state as a whole. Among California home buyers in 2005, according to Dowell Myers, a demographer at the University of Southern California, the most common surnames were Garcia, Hernandez, Rodriguez, Lopez and Martinez. Myers, in his new book, *Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Contract for the Future of America*, also points out that contrary to widespread belief, immigrants are not Peter Pans who never grow up and never change. "*When immigration is a new event,*" he writes, "*all the immigrants are new*.... The sudden upsurge in immigration to California was shocking to many in the state in the 1970s and 1980s, just as the current upsurge is shocking to residents of other states who have encountered immigration only recently."

Even the California story leaves lots of questions. The state's electorate, which is more than 70 percent Anglo, is very different from its population as a whole: Despite California's Democratic tilt—which is partly the result of the 1994–95 wave of Latino registration—and despite its sizable number of Latino officeholders, the state's voters are whiter, more affluent and more conservative than California residents as a whole. This "exclusive electorate" (as the PPIC's Mark Baldassare describes it) tends to be ambivalent, even schizophrenic, about conventional left-right questions, voting at various times in the past decade to ban gay marriage, increase penalties for juvenile crime, require convicted pedophiles to live away from schools and parks, legalize the medical use of marijuana and liberalize penalties for various drug offenses. Voters approved a $3 billion bond for stem-cell research, but rejected attempts to reform the state's cumbersome super-majority requirement to enact budgets or raise taxes or marginally soften the state's harsh three-strikes criminal-sentencing law.

California's 'exclusive electorate,' whiter and more affluent than the population, tends to be ambivalent about left-right questions.

It's probably no coincidence that, statewide, California voters have more trust in the initiative process than in their legislature. Districts are apportioned by population, not by number of voters, so members who come from poor and minority districts with lower registration rates have many fewer voters than those from affluent conservative districts. The legislature thus tends to be more liberal and disproportionately more responsive to Latinos than the electorate as a whole.

In response, the voters use the initiative to trump the politicians. And if there's been a collective message in those votes, it's been to maintain the status quo, despite California's famously dysfunctional governmental and fiscal system: the stringent property-tax limitations imposed by Prop 13 and its progeny, the rigid term limits for legislators, the complex constitutional spending formulas and the resulting confusion between state and local authority. Maintenance of clunky government seems for the moment the price the electorate is willing to pay to keep the newcomers and the services they get in check. The voters tell pollsters they want this creaky system to work, but do they really? California, with a tax load that, as a percentage of income, is below the national average, is stuck between its desire for quality services and its unwillingness to pay the commensurate taxes those services require.

That's hardly a novel problem, but in California it may also have a lot to do with the reluctance of the people in the exclusive electorate to fund schools and other services generously for people who are not like themselves, and particularly for people who they believe shouldn't be in this country in the first place. Whenever stories appear about crowded schools or refuting assertions that immigrants are taking the jobs and undercutting the wages of willing American workers, e-mails fly about "the burden of millions of illiterate Mexicans flooding into our schools and hospitals," or just about "the illegal Mexican peons." It's hard to know how representative those messages are—often they echo conservative radio talkers who seem to specialize in the issue—but they also reflect more objective research about voting preferences. "Shares of spending on productive public goods—education, roads, sewers and trash pickup—in U.S. cities (metro areas/urban counties) are inversely related to the [area's] ethnic fragmentation," wrote Harvard economist Alberto Alesina and two colleagues in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Or, in the words of Peter Lindert, an economic historian at the University of California, Davis:

> The more a middle-income voter looks at the likely recipient of public aid and says "that could be me" (or my daughter, or my whole family), the greater that voter's willingness to vote for taxes to fund such aid. Affinity would be fostered by ethnic homogeneity between middle-income voters and the perceived recipients. Conversely, ethnic division would create suspicions that taxpayers' money will be turned over to "them."

There's ample evidence in our own history—the attempts, for example, of Massachusetts Yankees a century ago to create new government institutions for Boston to keep political and fiscal control away from the Irish and other immigrant political groups. As Harvard political scientist Louis Hartz cogently argued a half-century ago, even the Framers of the Constitution, fearing the potential political power of working-class voters and the possibility of leveling assaults from below on their property and that of others, created a system of government checks and balances that was supposed to work as slowly as possible, if at all. The most progressive period in our history—the years of the New Deal and the Great Society, roughly from the early thirties to 1966—was also the time when immigration was at a historic low. The same was true for California in the generation after World War II, when the state's immigrants came from Iowa, Kansas and Wisconsin, not from Michoacán, Zacatecas or the Philippines, and when the state went on an unprecedented spree of public investment—in water systems, roads, parks, schools, university campuses—and when it vastly expanded its social programs. (Few people recall that in 1967 Governor Ronald Reagan—yes that Reagan—signed the biggest tax increase in California's history.) In 1960, for the most part, the voters were also the population.

Prop 13, which passed overwhelmingly in 1978 and was probably the biggest of California's modern political earthquakes, marked the crashing end of that era. Reinforced by the

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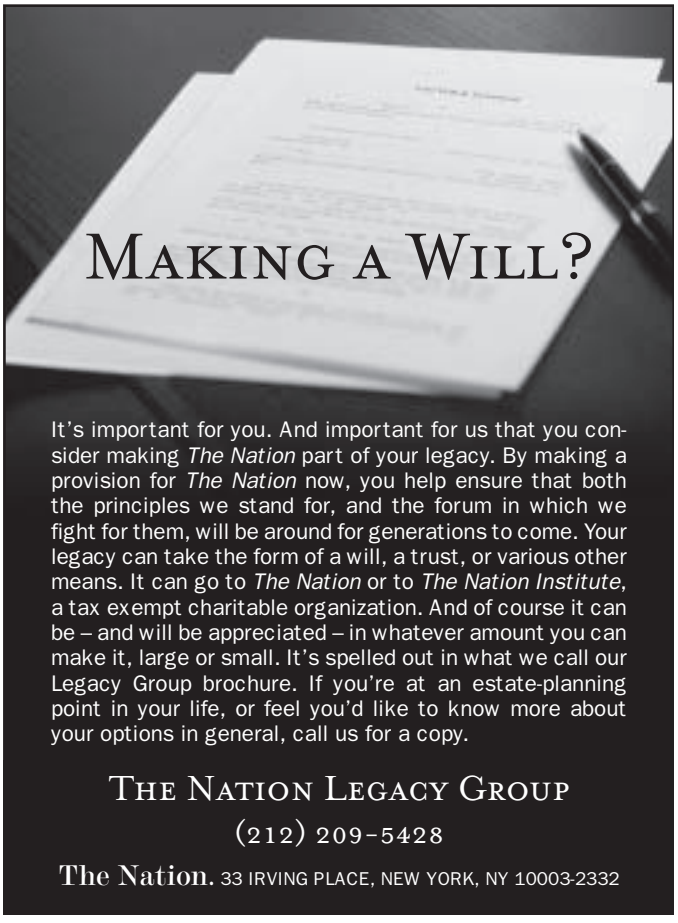
rapid rise in non-European immigration made possible by the end (in 1965) of the national-origins immigration quotas, California's very success as the realization of the American dream created the consequences—crowding, pollution, social tension and rising taxes—that set off the backlash. Because of its excessive historic optimism from the Gold Rush on, Richard Rodriguez has argued, California has always been the state of disappointment. Prop 13 and the great wave of other restrictive initiatives that followed—term limits; Prop 187; Prop 209, the prohibition against affirmative action in education and public employment, which has since been cloned in Washington and Michigan, among many other states—were expressions of that backlash. In the years after 1978, funding for schools and other services went from among the highest in the nation to below average and often well below.

Like the nation itself, Californians are ambivalent about immigrants. California allows illegal immigrants to pay in-state tuition at its public colleges, but doesn't grant them financial aid. During the anti-immigrant era of the early 1990s, it enacted a law prohibiting undocumented immigrants from obtaining driver's licenses, a prohibition that was briefly reversed in 2003, then quickly restored. Now, Governor Schwarzenegger, as part of a comprehensive state health insurance program, wants to give undocumented immigrant kids health insurance, something his own party vehemently opposes.

But the biggest issue raised by California is whether it is willing to undertake the historically unprecedented task of educating the millions of immigrant and second- and third-generation children—children from California's enormous diversity of languages and cultures—into the skilled, literate population that a high-tech global economy demands. It's those kids who will be the core of the state's—and much of the nation's—workforce and who, if the effort fails, will become part of an increasingly stratified society in which they will be a major part of a permanent underclass. A recent study by the Educational Testing Service concludes that if the educational achievement of American students isn't raised, American workers, many of them black and Latino, will have lower literacy levels and lower skills than the current labor force.

> Put crudely, over the next 25 years or so [the ETS report says], as better educated individuals leave the workforce they will be replaced by those who, on average, have lower levels of education and skill. Over this same period, nearly half of the projected job growth will be concentrated in occupations associated with higher education and skill levels.

The success of this undertaking depends in large part on the ability of the electorate to understand that the education of children already here is not spending on the undeserving but a crucial investment in the nation's future. It depends on whether they'll let immigrants come out of the legal shadows—to let them drive, for example, and get legal jobs. Perhaps most crucial, it depends on how fast the large gap between the voters and the population as a whole begins to close. None of this is certain. Given the nation's changing population, however, it's almost a certainty that, as on many occasions past, California will be the big test. ■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THE MAN WHO WAS KIDNAPPED, FLOWN TO EGYPT AND TORTURED FOR YEARS TELLS HIS STORY.

The CIA's Italian Job

MOHAMAD BAZZI

RYAN INZANA

Cairo

From her third-floor balcony, the Egyptian woman saw the whole thing: a group of CIA and Italian agents snatching the imam of her local mosque off a Milan street, stuffing him into a white van and driving off. It was February 17, 2003, and Hassan Osama Nasr was walking to the mosque for noon prayers. He was stopped by a man waving a badge and shouting, "Police!" In perfect Italian, the man demanded Nasr's ID, wallet and cellphone. Then two men came up from behind Nasr, grabbed his arms and forced him into the van. It all took about three minutes.

But the agents didn't know that someone had seen the abduction. The woman called the mosque, and word spread among worshipers. By evening, the mosque's leaders suspected that Nasr—a cleric known as Abu Omar who had fled Egypt in 1990—would be sent back to his homeland. They phoned Montasser al-Zayyat, a prominent lawyer in Cairo who has spent his career defending Islamic militants. "The plan was that no one would see him being kidnapped and he would disappear," Zayyat said in an interview at his office. "But that Egyptian woman who happened to be standing on her balcony saved him."

Nasr, 44, is now at the center of the most politically explosive case involving the CIA practice of "extraordinary rendition," in which a suspected militant is secretly abducted and taken to another country for interrogation and, usually, torture. After years of denial, the Bush Administration now acknowledges using the extra-judicial tactic but insists that it does not sanction the torture of suspects.

In February an Italian judge indicted twenty-six Americans—a US Air Force colonel and twenty-five suspected CIA operatives, including the former Rome station chief and former Milan substation chief—for their role in the months-long plot to abduct Nasr. Although none of the suspects are in custody, the trial is set to begin June 8, and it has already become an embarrassment for the Bush Administration and the Italian government.

The public relations disaster may have saved others from abduction and torture. "I suspect that Abu Omar's case has slowed down the policy of renditions," said John Sifton, senior researcher on terrorism and counterterrorism at Human Rights Watch. "It was an incredible embarrassment for the CIA. Undoubtedly, it made them think twice about other abductions."

But the star witness, Nasr, might not be able to testify in Italy. He was released from an Egyptian prison in February, but his lawyer says he is not allowed to leave the country or to make any public statements. "The Egyptian authorities warned him that if he speaks about the case, he will be sent back to prison," said Zayyat. (Egyptian officials had made good on an earlier threat to throw Nasr back in prison: After being released in April 2004, he was arrested twenty days later when the secret police learned that he had been discussing his abduction.)

American and Egyptian officials have refused to comment on the case. Egypt has even refused to confirm or deny that it had Nasr in custody. But a Cairo appeals court ordered his release after he'd been held in prison for four years without charge. And now Egypt, the second-largest recipient of US foreign aid after Israel, is trying to save its benefactor from further embarrassment by preventing Nasr from testifying in Italy. "The Americans want this case to go away," Zayyat said. "They don't want Abu Omar to publicly describe what happened to him."

It's hard to believe that the CIA didn't know what would happen to Nasr. "Egypt's intelligence services are infamous for using torture," said Sifton. "The Americans knew that by sending him to Egypt, he would be tortured," Zayyat said. "They wanted someone to do this dirty work for them."

The trial is likely to reveal new details about the CIA's covert operations and the complicity of Italian intelligence services, and to cast a harsh light on the Bush Administration's dealings with its European allies. Nasr's lawyer plans to travel to Italy for the trial and to file a lawsuit against the US and Italian governments, seeking $13 million in damages. Zayyat also plans to file a separate lawsuit against former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, alleging that he personally approved the abduction. Berlusconi has denied having prior knowledge of the plan.

Nasr entered Italy illegally in 1997 and was granted political asylum four years later. He had fled Egypt after being imprisoned twice in the late 1980s for antigovernment sermons at a mosque in Alexandria. Although he has not been charged with a crime in Italy, he was under investigation for allegedly recruiting Muslim men to fight in Iraq. Italian officials have said they were about to detain him for questioning when the CIA abducted him.

"Abu Omar is prepared to go to Italy, even if he's going to be tried and imprisoned," Zayyat said. "He's convinced of his innocence, and he's confident in the Italian judiciary."

The lead Italian prosecutor, Armando Spataro, said after the indictments were handed down that he wants Nasr to testify against the American agents, but Egypt has never responded to an Italian request for access to the cleric. "Obviously it would be useful to hear what he has to say," Spataro said. "If he is banned from leaving [Egypt], there's nothing we can do."

Mohamad Bazzi, the Middle East bureau chief for Newsday *since 2003, is based in Beirut.*

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In April 2006 Nasr appeared in an Egyptian court for the first time and gave a detailed, two-hour account of his experience. Zayyat said Egyptian officials have refused to give him or Italian prosecutors a transcript of that session. But Zayyat provided *The Nation* with four pages of handwritten notes he took during his client's testimony. Nasr told the court that shortly after his abduction, US and Italian agents put a black hood over his head and "punched me in the stomach and all over my body." He was driven to Aviano Air Base, a joint US-Italian installation, where he boarded a small plane for a flight that lasted an hour and a half. As Nasr tried to resist, the beatings continued on the plane. "I was bewildered," he told the court. "I didn't understand what was happening around me."

At a US base in Germany, Nasr was led into a "large, cold room." His hands were untied and the hood was taken off. He saw a group of fifteen to twenty men all wearing masks and Special Forces uniforms. The men wrapped his entire head and face with duct tape and cut holes over his nose and mouth so he could breathe. He was stripped of his clothes and dressed in a jumpsuit, and his arms and legs were shackled. He was then hustled onto another plane. By that point, Nasr had stopped resisting—and the beating had ended. "I had given up," he said. "I was resigned to my fate."

After the plane landed at Cairo airport on February 18, 2003, a guard on the tarmac told Nasr, "You have arrived in Egypt, Abu Omar." Still blindfolded and shackled, he was stuffed into another van and driven to the Mukhabarat (secret police) headquarters outside Cairo. Guards removed the duct tape from his head and face, allowing his hair and beard to take their form. He was escorted into a room by an Egyptian security official who told him that "two pashas" wanted to speak with him.

Nasr testified that he recognized one of the men as Egypt's interior minister. The other man appeared to be an American. "Only the Egyptian spoke," Nasr said. "He offered me to become an informant. If I accepted, he said, I would be returned to Italy right away before anyone noticed my disappearance." Nasr refused, and the two men left. That's when the torture began. He testified that he was beaten with wooden sticks, given electric shocks and hung upside down. He was sometimes shackled to an iron rack, nicknamed "the Bride" and zapped with stun guns.

At other times, Nasr testified, he was tied to a wet mattress on the floor. To prevent him from moving, a guard sat on a wooden chair on top of Nasr's shoulders. Another interrogator would then flip a switch, sending jolts of electricity into the mattress coils. For most of his four years in prison, Nasr was kept in solitary confinement. He testified that his cell had no toilet and no lights, and "roaches and rats walked across my body."

Nasr spent the first seven months at the Mukhabarat prison. He was then sent to a State Security prison, where he was regularly tortured during interrogations. Throughout this time, Zayyat was trying to confirm that Nasr was in Egyptian custody. "I was looking for him in the prisons where they keep political detainees. But I found nothing," Zayyat said. "I filed requests for information from the courts. Nothing."

A year after Nasr's abduction, Zayyat finally established his presence in Egypt when several Islamists detained in State Security told the lawyer that they had seen Nasr being moved around the prison. "It took one year to confirm that he was

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here," Zayyat said, shaking his head. "One year! And I still didn't receive any official word."

In March 2004 Zayyat filed a petition at the appeals court in Cairo seeking Nasr's release. The prosecutors filed a response, in which they sought to detain the cleric for "membership in an illegal organization"—usually a reference to the Muslim Brotherhood or Egypt's two violent Islamist groups, Gama'a Islamiya (Islamic Group) or Islamic Jihad. Prosecutors argued that Nasr was active in the Gama'a, which helped assassinate President Anwar Sadat in 1981 and later waged a bloody seven-year campaign to topple the government. But the court did not find the evidence sufficient, and it ordered Nasr's release. When I asked Zayyat if he had a copy of the court's decision, he laughed, saying, "We don't have those kinds of laws in this country."

In April 2004 State Security agents drove Nasr to his family's home in Alexandria. They told him to keep quiet if he wanted to stay out of prison. But Nasr immediately called his wife and friends in Milan and described his abduction in detail. He did not know that Italian prosecutors had tapped the phones at his home and mosque in Milan as part of their investigation into the CIA plot. Those wiretaps provided Italian investigators with their first full account of Nasr's case. When word got back to Egyptian authorities that Nasr was talking, he was arrested again.

"When they brought me back to State Security, they said, 'We warned you not to talk with anyone, but you violated our deal,'" Nasr testified. "'So now we're going to keep you.'"

During this second imprisonment, Nasr was held under Egypt's emergency laws—imposed by President Hosni Mubarak soon after Sadat's assassination and never rescinded—which allow authorities to hold anyone without charge for thirty days. But the police and intelligence agencies can renew the thirty-day period with little effort, turning it into indefinite detention. Nasr testified that he wasn't tortured as badly during his second stint, but he was again placed in solitary. Despairing and worried that he would never be released, he twice tried to commit suicide.

When Zayyat learned that his client was arrested again, he began filing monthly petitions for his release. "Every time the thirty-day period would expire, I would submit another petition," he said. "It would say, This person is being held without charge, and there's nothing to justify his detention." In the end, it was one of these procedural petitions—and, undoubtedly, the growing international scandal—that won Nasr's release.

On February 22 Nasr appeared unexpectedly at the trial of an Egyptian blogger in Alexandria [see Negar Azimi, "Bloggers Against Torture," February 19]. In front of the TV cameras, he pulled back his sleeves to show evidence of the torture he'd endured: scars on his wrists and ankles. He said there were more scars on his stomach and other parts of his body that he was too embarrassed to show. "I don't want any more trouble with anyone," he said. "My body cannot bear any more prison and torture." When journalists asked him for more details, he walked away, saying he feared going back to prison. ■

LETTERS

CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

Buffalo, NY

■ Patricia Williams writes "the word 'white' is…alluded to in the chorus [of "I Wanna Be Black"]…with crystal clarity…: I don't wanna be a fucked-up middle-class college student." Where is it written that "a fucked-up middle-class college student'" has to be white? I refer Williams to Spike Lee's *School Daze*.

MITCHELL HARWITZ

Falls Church, Va.

■ Patricia Williams's column was captivating and on point. But I must take exception to her inclusion of Condoleezza Rice in the group of politicos who are at once black and articulate. Dr. Rice cannot speak without uh, uh, uh-ing her way through a sentence. While she is intelligent, articulate she is not. CORA YANACEK

Oak Park, Ill.

■ Thank you, Patricia Williams for your refreshingly rational and thoughtful discussion of the Obama candidacy. As a longtime Obama supporter, I have been closely following the coverage of his campaign. It is frustrating when Maureen Dowd frames the race as a high school popularity contest, when Matt Taibbi assumes that Obama is a Bill Clinton–esque "BS artist" and when some on the left run away from Obama because he is a celebrity. Since when is eloquence synonymous with "BS"? And shouldn't we be thankful we have a candidate who is both a rock star and a progressive?

Fortunately, the Senator has almost a year to demonstrate that he's no "empty suit." His efforts in the State Senate won him wide acclaim for his ability to win many Republican votes for progressive reforms. Likewise, his campaign for the US Senate in 2004 brought together a famously divided electorate. Some dismiss Obama's victories as luck, but luck can't explain why he won such lopsided victories—70 percent against Alan Keyes and 52 percent in the primary (versus 48 percent for his six opponents *combined*).

By all means, be skeptical. Put Obama and his ideas to the test and continue to push him in a progressive direction. The more people who give Obama a fair hearing, the better his chances will be. GIL LENZ

Spokane, Wash.

■ If I see one more article about presidential candidates' attractive attributes, racial heritage, articulateness, authenticity, fresh vision, youthfulness and good-looking Kennedy-esque appeal and/or the public's grasp or lack of grasp of those "transcendent" characteristics, I'll hurl all over my *Nation*. Why is the national media fixated on candidates' superficialities? Is it to fulfill some perceived craving of the dim-witted masses?

This tendency among media to make candidates into starlets has the aroma of a high school student council race revolving around who's the hunkiest jock/cutest cheerleader, who's the best class clown and who's got the most sizzlin' put-downs. Of course, high schoolers have an excuse. Their weightiest campaign issue likely is whether to have sodas or health drinks in the vending machine (the principal wouldn't dare allow discussion of whether to ban on-campus military recruiters). National media outlets have no such excuse.

ROBERT A. ETHINGTON

Hempstead, NY

■ All this nattering about Barack Obama's race: He appears to be a very capable young man. Can't we just leave it at that? ROY METCALF

SCOOTER LIBBY—A LITTLE BIT FIBBY

La Mesa, Calif.

■ Though widely reputed that Scooter had "tooted,"
His attorneys disputed in terms convoluted
(as he remained muted).
While the jury computed I fervently rooted,
And, lo and behold, his defense was refuted.
But my joy at the verdict is somewhat diluted,
Because Cheney and Rove still remain to be booted.

(With apologies to C. Trillin) HARVEY MOZER

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Veiled Intolerance

RICHARD WOLIN

Here are some scenes, culled from recent headlines, of a continent—"Eurabia"—seemingly on the brink:

§ A Berlin opera company abruptly cancels the performance of Mozart's *Idomeneo*—whose anticlerical finale features the bloody, severed heads of Jesus, Buddha and Muhammad—for fear of provoking a violent response on the part of Muslims in Germany, who number some 3.3 million. Undoubtedly, in the back of the director's mind was: (1) the global rioting spurred by the Danish cartoon controversy, which featured demeaning images of the prophet Muhammad as a terrorist; (2) the detection last summer of undetonated terrorist bombs aboard the beloved Deutsche Bahn, or German railway system. Ultimately, the decision to cancel *Idomeneo* was rescinded and the opera was performed in December, without a hitch.

§ In a recent speech, Pope Benedict XVI approvingly quotes a fourteenth-century Byzantine emperor's bellicose claim: "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." Underlying the Pope's prejudicial characterization of Islam are his fears concerning ongoing negotiations over Turkey's admission to the European Union—an outcome that would result in an influx of some 70 million additional Muslims, thereby, in his view, challenging Europe's "Christian character." To his credit, the Pontiff modified his position on Turkey's admission to the EU during a November visit to Ankara, amid massive anti-Vatican protests.

§ In October Ekin Deligöz, a woman delegate to the German Bundestag, receives death threats for suggesting that Muslim immigrants remove their head scarves in order to "enter the historical present."

§ Robert Redeker, a high school philosophy teacher from Toulouse, publishes an incendiary article in the conservative French daily *Le Figaro* comparing Islam unfavorably with Christianity and Judaism ("Jesus is a master of love; Muhammad is a master of hatred"). Redeker is denounced by the Al Jazeera television network. Islamic groups post his photo, telephone number and home address on the Internet. Shortly thereafter, he must go into hiding in order to avoid numerous death threats.

§ British House of Commons leader Jack Straw admonishes Muslim women sporting the *niqab*, or full-face veil, for promoting social separatism. This stance is publicly endorsed by Prime Minister Tony Blair, who argued the *niqab* should be abandoned insofar as it constitutes a "mark of separation" and thus inhibits sociability. More important, Straw's and Blair's criticisms suggest that Britain and other European nations are re-examining their commitment to multiculturalism in the wake of fears concerning the rise of "Islamism": the idea that Islamic precepts should trump the rule of law and Western secularism.

Of course, underlying these European anxieties are the 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid (191 deaths), the 2005 London Underground bombings (fifty-five deaths) and the September 11 attacks. The intemperate and overheated reactions to these events, however, indicate that it is increasingly difficult, if not impos-

BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ESSAY

WHY THE FRENCH DON'T LIKE HEADSCARVES: Islam, the State, and Public Space.
By John R. Bowen.
Princeton. 290 pp. $27.95.

INTEGRATING ISLAM: Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France.
By Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse. Foreword by Olivier Roy.
Brookings Institution Press.
342 pp. $22.95.

WHEN WAYS OF LIFE COLLIDE: Multiculturalism and Its Discontents in the Netherlands.
By Paul M. Sniderman and Louk Hagendoorn.
Princeton. 176 pp. $24.95.

MURDER IN AMSTERDAM: The Death of Theo van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance.
By Ian Buruma.
Penguin Press. 278 pp. $24.95.

ETHNICITY AND EQUALITY: France in the Balance.
By Azouz Begag. Translated and with an introduction by Alec G. Hargreaves.
University of Nebraska.
151 pp. $14.95.

Richard Wolin, Distinguished Professor of History and Political Science at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, is currently at work on a book, Wind From the East: French Intellectuals and the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

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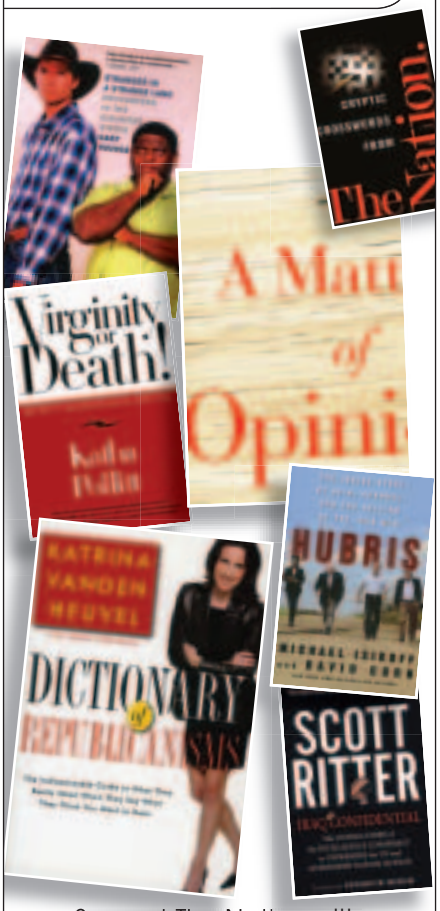

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sible, to have a reasonable and fair-minded discussion about Islam and the West. Instead, in the Western mind, "Islam" has become inextricably associated with "Islamic fundamentalism": the attempt to subject all spheres of life to the theological precepts and strictures of the Koran.

Today there are an estimated 15 million to 17 million Muslims living in Europe. Anyone who wishes to address the theme of "Europe and Islam" immediately runs up against an intractable definitional conundrum. For in Europe, the monolithic religion known as Islam is functionally nonexistent. The national origins of the European Muslim population vary dramatically from country to country. To wit: Whereas the majority of Dutch Muslims hail from Indonesia, Suriname, Morocco and Turkey, most British Muslims emigrated from the Indian subcontinent. Germany's Muslims are predominantly Turks (Turkey is, of course, a secular republic, honoring the separation of mosque and state), whereas the origins of the French Muslim community may be traced to the Maghreb, or Saharan Africa.

The French Muslim community itself is further subdivided among Arabs, Berbers (from the mountainous Kabyle region of Algeria), Africans and converts, who compose 1 percent of French Muslims. How, then, might one classify a nonobservant Kabyle immigrant who is a French citizen, born in Algeria, educated in the French school system, who speaks Amazigh at home and French at work? Is he/she Berber, Algerian, French or, qua nonobservant, even veritably Muslim? Clearly, the vagaries of religion, identity and ethnicity are multifarious, rich and potentially dizzying. In *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves*, John Bowen, a professor of anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis, describes a discussion concerning the permutations of immigrant identity in which one woman avows, tongue-in-cheek: "We always mix up categories, so now I can be a *française d'origine algérienne musulmane non-pratiquante*"—a nonpracticing French Muslim of Algerian descent.

There are also prodigious generational differences among Europe's Muslims. As a rule, Islamism's greatest appeal is among second- or third-generation "immigrants": maladapted youth whom the integration process has failed and who feel desperately torn between two worlds—their parents' country of origin, which many have never seen, and their adoptive European homeland. Sadly, psychologists have shown that, whereas depression is prominent among first-generation immigrants who experience adaptational difficulties, schizophrenia predominates among maladjusted second-generation migrants. Such youth turn to Islamism in order to resolve what is often a severe and protracted identity crisis. Given the prevailing logic of social exclusion, it is little wonder that Europe's immigrant ghetto communities are concentrated in dismal neighborhoods characterized by high unemployment, poverty and criminality. Under these circumstances, fundamentalist Islam provides "existential meaning," a sense of belonging as well as an astringent critique of Western mores, which are often perceived as "corrupt" and "materialistic"—a critique that resonates profoundly with the immigrants' own severe adaptational disappointments and failures.

These facts strongly suggest that converts to Islamic fundamentalism are made and not born. In most cases, Islamism is a conscious choice embraced by frustrated second-generation immigrants who feel they are growing up in an ethnic and cultural no man's land. In *French Hospitality* (1984), Tahar Ben Jelloun, a Moroccan writer based in Paris, accurately describes them as "a generation doomed to cultural orphanhood and ontological fragility." Thus, Islam and Islamism are two different things—a point that "clash of civilization" theorists like Samuel Huntington have failed to register. (In a recent book, *Who Are We: The Challenges to America's National Identity*, Huntington goes so far as to characterize Muslim immigrants as an "indigestible" minority.)

Thus the rise of Islamism in Europe has very little to do with the intrinsic nature of Islam as a religion and everything to do with the failures of integration and Muslim immigrants' sense of de-territorialization. As Olivier Roy comments in his foreword to Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse's *Integrating Islam*: "All serious studies of the formation of terrorism in Europe show that the process is more likely to be the result of alienation, isolation and generational crisis." This conclusion distinctly belies the claims of scaremongering jeremiads like Bruce Bawer's *While Europe Slept* and French author Emmanuel Brenner's *The Lost Territories of the Republic*, which misleadingly contend that, à la Bernard Lewis, Europe is undergoing a process of "reverse colonization." The implication is that in twenty years' time, Europe as we have known it will cease to exist; it will have instead become "Eurabia."

Official government policy toward Muslim immigrants has also differed vast-

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ly from nation to nation. Britain (1 million to 2 million Muslim immigrants out of a total population of 60 million) and Holland (1 million Muslim immigrants out of a total population of 16 million) have for the most part embraced a flexible, multicultural approach. Instead of assimilating, immigrants have been encouraged to maintain their time-honored, traditional religious and cultural orientations. In many instances, the state has actively nurtured such allegiances, practically, financially and rhetorically. As visitors to these countries well know, nightly newscasts might readily be confused with ad spots for the United Colors of Benetton.

Following the November 2004 murder of filmmaker and provocateur Theo van Gogh—who was fond of referring to Muslims as "goat fuckers"—by a Moroccan Dutchman with Islamist leanings, Dutch patience with multiculturalism, already strained in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, seems to have reached a tipping point. In 1999 immigrants made up 45 percent of Amsterdam's population. Projections suggest that the percentage will increase to 52 percent by 2015. The authors of *When Ways of Life Collide: Multiculturalism and Its Discontents in the Netherlands* deem the Dutch multicultural experiment to be a grand and unequivocal failure. In their view, multiculturalism and liberal democracy are fundamentally incompatible. Their argument is a relatively simple one: By encouraging "difference" among ethnic subgroups, multiculturalism ends up turning these groups into targets of resentment and thereby insuring their rejection by the majority culture. As the authors remark in mock astonishment: "No one anticipated that liberal values would be used to legitimize illiberal practices. But so they have. What other reaction could the majority have but to reject Muslim immigrants? What other conclusion could they draw but to oppose cultural pluralism and to press for assimilation?"

Yet behind such claims lies an additional, unsupported insinuation or suspicion: that Islam and liberal democracy are incompatible. As others have noted, this perspective, rather than encouraging tolerance and openness among citizens, ends up blaming the victims and pandering to majority prejudice. Moreover, it conveniently overlooks the many highly successful instances of European Muslim integration. In France, for example, it has become fashionable to speak of the rise of a successful and prosperous

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beurgoisie. ("Beur" is French slang for second-generation North African immigrants.)

A similar disillusionment with multiculturalism suffused Britain after the July 2005 London Underground attacks. Yet, far from being a one-way street, the spiral of mistrust and suspicion has been mutual. The flip side of heightened European Islamophobia is that Muslim immigrants increasingly feel subject to the hurt and injustices of harassment and discrimination. As a Moroccan immigrant writer recently quipped: "When Samia wants to rent a studio apartment that has been advertised in Paris, she finds upon giving her name that the apartment has been unavailable since September 11." In *Murder in Amsterdam*, his recent book on the death of Theo van Gogh, Ian Buruma interviews a gifted Muslim law student who, with admirable concision, explains: "Before [September 11], I was just Nora. Then, all of a sudden, I was a Muslim."

France is another case entirely. In keeping with the precepts of "Republicanism," it has followed a rigorously assimilationist approach—a color-blind, one-size-fits-all, "immigrants into Frenchmen" model of citizenship. The Hexagon experienced a foretaste of future difficulties during an October 2001 "friendly" soccer match between the French and Algerian national teams intended to promote interethnic solidarity. The match was staged at the Stade de France in Paris, the scene of France's brilliant 1998 World Cup triumph. Expectations were high. The black-beur-blanc French squad, which prominently featured Africans and Arabs (notably captain Zinedine Zidane), was a walking advertisement for multiculturalism. But with France leading 4 to 1 in the second half, things fell apart. Frustrated *beur* fans suddenly mobbed the pitch, and the match had to be discontinued.

According to the best available estimates, there are 5 million to 6 million Muslims in France out of a total population of 60 million. French republican ideology is so studiously tone-deaf to considerations of "difference" that the law forbids the statistical tracking of immigrants according to their ethnic or religious backgrounds. Whereas the rigidly assimilationist approach seemed to work well for an earlier generation of predominantly Eastern European immigrants, the balance sheet vis-à-vis North Africans and their descendants has been decidedly mixed. With the November 2005 riots in the *cités*, or suburban housing projects—events that gave the lie to the fiction that "there are no ghettos in France"—a point of no return was apparently reached. In the aftermath of the 2005 disturbances, French President Jacques Chirac explicitly instructed state-run television networks to begin featuring more persons of color. Even Interior Minister and presidential contender Nicolas Sarkozy, who helped stoke the 2005 eruption with his racist characterization of Muslim youth as *racaille*, or "scum," has come round to embracing some form of affirmative action as both inevitable and indispensable, given the failings of France's traditional "integrationist" model.

The political and ideological challenges of reconciling republicanism with the demands of diversity are well illustrated by Azouz Begag's fine study, *Ethnicity and Equality: France in the Balance*. Begag was France's first minister for equal opportunities. He was also the first person of North African descent to occupy Cabinet-level rank. At one point in his narrative, Begag recounts his experiences as an Algerian growing up in Lyon, where he attended the Ecole Sergent-Blandan. It turns out that the school was named for an officer who, during the 1840s, played a prominent role in the French conquest of Begag's native Algeria. As Begag observes:

> The day I learned the story of Sergeant Blandan I felt a strange combination of emotions. To think that he and I had been born in the same town, Lyon! To think that he had probably fought and killed some of my poor, defenseless ancestors in one of the tribes in the Sétif region.… To think that, a century later, I went to a school bearing his name and learned to become French there. It was in that same school that I also had my first experiences of racism.

Since, in France, discrimination against North Africans still abounds—"You kicked us out of Algeria in 1962; you're not going to take over here now" is Begag's apt summary of the prevailing anti-Maghrebian mentality—to redress this situation, Begag sees no alternative but to encourage, *comme les Américains*, some minimal form of multiculturalism. He gazes admiringly across the Atlantic at the "melting pot" model in America, where, unlike in France, the idea of hyphenated identities has gained broad public acceptance. Begag speaks glowingly—and perhaps naïvely—of his experiences as a visiting professor at Cornell University during the 1980s: "I have been fascinated by the pragmatic way in which different ethnic groups have been mixed together in that enormous country. I was struck the most by what I saw on television. Journalists of every color under the sun held front-rank positions in prime-time slots."

Begag is understandably frustrated with the snail-like pace of upward social mobility among France's North African immigrants, which in his view reveals the bankruptcy of the republican-assimilationist model. As he observes: "I am…disappointed personally by the extraordinary slowness of the system during an entire generation in responding to the urgent demands of young ethnics for proper social recognition." Yet, on the whole, and despite his coveting of cultural diversity *à l'Amérique*, Begag's remedies and proposals are quite timorous. In his view, measures bearing any resemblance to American-style affirmative action—what the French disparagingly refer to as *la discrimination positive*—are unacceptable, insofar as they remain irreconcilable with republican values. In Begag's view, French occupational life must come closer to being a genuine meritocracy, thereby harking back to the French revolutionary—and quintessentially republican—battle cry of "careers open to talent."

Begag's "equal opportunities" approach stresses the need to overcome racism and prejudice by insuring that qualified minority applicants gain access to the employment prospects from which, historically, they have been systematically excluded. But in what ways would this "occupational" approach effectively cut through the thick tangle of existing prejudice? And how, exactly, might Begag's "equal opportunities" desideratum be achieved in lieu of more active methods and approaches? On this matter, France's first minister for equal opportunities is strangely reticent: a good indication of just how difficult it remains—even for those with good intentions—to surmount those aspects of the republican tradition that remain irreconcilable with the realities of contemporary cultural diversity.

Three years ago, eyebrows were raised when, following a voluble public debate, France passed a draconian law banning the foulard, or Islamic head scarf, from public schools. The issue first arose during the late 1980s, following a series of Middle East–related terrorist attacks in Paris and the fallout over the Salman Rushdie affair (Rushdie's Japanese translator was killed, his Italian translator was stabbed and his Norwegian publisher was brutally assaulted). Among the leading

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advocates of the ban were French feminists, who were concerned about Islam's repressive effects on girls. Confusing Islam and Islamism—and apparently oblivious to how their rhetoric might sound in some Muslim ears—women's rights advocates confidently decreed that the foulard was a sign of women's submission as well as a symbol of Islamic fundamentalism.

But clearly, to sport the foulard in Bobigny, France, means something qualitatively different from wearing it in the Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran or contemporary Saudi Arabia. In the French case, it bespeaks a conscious attempt on the part of second-generation "immigrant" girls to reconnect with an otherwise fragmentary religious heritage. In certain instances, it may indeed connote female servility, as Muslim feminist opponents of the foulard have argued. But many Muslim girls view the head scarf as a source of empowerment: a public profession of faith that provides their lives with an indispensable source of meaning and purpose. As John Bowen shows in his excellent book, sociological surveys have confirmed that "young women [choose] to adopt Islamic dress, including the headscarf, as part of efforts to negotiate a sphere of social freedom and authority and to construct an identity as a Muslim, and that the relative weight of these two reasons depended on their age and social situation."

The other major group to vigorously oppose the head scarf was committed republicans: a formidable alliance of socialists and left-leaning intellectuals. In their overwrought view, to allow the foulard in French public schools would represent the "Munich of the Republican school"—an ignominious surrender to the forces of ignorance and superstition. One of the signal achievements of French republicanism was the 1905 law establishing the rudiments of *laïcité*: delineating firm lines of separation between church and state but also insuring that, unlike in the ancien régime, public education would remain firmly in the hands of state officials. It was only at this point that French secularists definitively won a battle that had begun approximately 110 years earlier, with the July 12, 1790, Civil Constitution of the Clergy—the law that required clerics to swear an oath of allegiance to the Constitution.

In order to understand the often baffling complexities of the foulard affair, one must appreciate French republicanism's longstanding aversion to the idea of groups or associations trespassing on the sacrosanct terrain of state authority. From an orthodox republican standpoint, laicization's triumph was the result of a bitter and protracted Hundred Years' War against ecclesiastical backwardness. Republicanism's defenders were not about to cede to Muslim immigrants hard-won gains that had been made over the course of a century-long struggle against Catholicism. Nor was it by chance that the conflict over the public face of Islam erupted in that traditional republican bastion, the *école*, or public school system. For during the heyday of the Third Republic, it was the *école* that was charged with the herculean task of politically integrating France's culturally and linguistically diverse regions: turning an assortment of unruly provincials (Bretons, Languedocians, Basques and Corsicans) into loyal and committed "citizens of the Republic." French republicans proudly distinguish their *étatiste* conception of citizenship, which guarantees a neutral public space, from the atomistic Anglo-Saxon model, where the individual is the primary bearer of rights. As political philosopher Blandine Kriegel, head of Chirac's High Council on Integration, confidently asserts: "The public school is part of the public because it is where civic education takes place. And so is public administration. There will never be Sikh civil servants in France!"

Viewed from a distance, France's head-scarf controversy has less to do with Muslim integration than with questions of French identity.

Opponents of the head-scarf proscription aptly pointed out that if the overall goal was to facilitate Muslim integration, the ban would be radically counterproductive. For the penalty, expulsion, would merely result in the exclusion of Muslim girls from the public school system, that crucible of republican socialization. Thus, in the eyes of many, the ban seemed to be a classic instance of a cure that was worse than the disease. Fortunately, by the mid-1990s, the conflict over the foulard seemed to have been successfully defused via the tactful negotiation of individual cases at the local level. Why, then, in 2003 did the Chirac government decide to revisit the entire vexed and contentious issue? The decision seems especially baffling in light of the fact that, according to French government statistics, of an estimated 250,000 Muslim schoolgirls, a mere 1,200 wore the foulard with any regularity. Under the circumstances, why not leave well enough alone?

Clearly, one of the reasons had to do with anti-immigrant candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen's stunning showing in the first round of the 2002 presidential elections, when, by edging out the Socialist candidate, Lionel Jospin, he acceded to the second round against the incumbent, Jacques Chirac. The mainstream political parties—especially Chirac's Union for a Popular Movement, which stood to lose the most—were determined not to leave the hot-button issue of Muslim integration to right-wingers like Le Pen. By resuscitating the foulard affair and flaunting a zero-tolerance approach vis-à-vis Islam, center-right politicians like Chirac and Sarkozy sought to exploit the issue for political gain. But was Islam really the issue, or did it merely happen to be the religious credo of France's largest immigrant group—a prospect that casts the head-scarf controversy in an entirely different light?

In fact, when viewed from a distance, it appears that the foulard affair has much less to do with Muslim integration than questions of French identity—an identity that, in recent years, has found itself markedly under siege. Among convinced republicans, drawing a line in the sand over the head scarf was a way of preserving Frenchness in an era when what it meant to be French had been exposed to a variety of threatening, centrifugal political challenges. In recent years France has, with varying degrees of success, attempted to fend off threats to national sovereignty from the European Union (hence the resounding no vote in the May 2005 referendum on the European Constitution) as well as the forces of globalization. Having to stand by helplessly in 2002–03 as America began recklessly funneling troops into the Middle East—a former French sphere of influence—seemed another cruel reminder of a once proud nation-state's geopolitical inconsequence. Moreover, the humiliating military defeats France endured in the era of decolonization—Dien Bien Phu (1954) and Algeria (1954–62)—have left permanent discernible scars on the national psyche. Thus, over the last several decades, the French state has seen its room for maneuver drastically curtailed in the realm of both foreign and domestic affairs.

Advocates of laicization thought that reviving the foulard controversy would allow them to engage in a last-ditch, rearguard action to preserve the contours of French republicanism. Unfortunately, the thought that success might come at the cost of further alienating several million Muslims crossed their minds only after the fact—if at all. ■

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Mr. Dynamite Splits

December 25, 2006

Long before the patriot acts
of anthems *Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud*,
Funky President and *Living In America*,
you and your Revue were

the only flames the hood could afford,
and by "hood" I mean "nation"
and by "nation" I mean "community"
and by "community"

I mean any one of the various
Black "folk" Americas
within Black America,
the Constitution's future reframers.

Your famous flames
were not the famous flames
of civil war or civil rights.
These flames were raw chicken guts

and a bewildered next-time fire
of choked chords and percussive horns
Papa lit the behinds
of new bags with.

To quote Sweet Charles, *Yes it's you*
the warm globe mourns…
for passing mashed potatoes and peas.
Gimme some more.

No. 1, not because of the hits
but because the roads,
like Augusta, all lead back to you.
Georgia might not-never let us bury you.

The hellish crossroads of black genius
(not geography) left you leathery as Miles.
Not the first to smack-your-bitch-up
and stick-it-to-the-man,

but the first to smack-your-bitch-up,
stick-it-to-the-man,
fine your band, tour Vietnam,
serve two drummers,
fire your band, tour Africa,
save the Boston Garden, endorse Nixon,
rehire your band, sue a rap group
and start a choir in prison.

Pre Hip Hop, you had your own emcee,
your own dancers, your own cape,
Lear jet and crown.
You graduated Super Bad.

Dr. King called it Drum Major Instinct.
Shirley Chisholm,
unbought and unbossed.
Damn right you were somebody!

"These nuts," that's what all the Camel Walks,
splits, spins and Popcorns
told those early closed doors.
Get up offa that thang.

Long live your plea please pleases,
Byrd's brotherly loyalty,
and calling-on Maceo's licking-stick.
Live at the Apollo laid legend to myth.

Before Hammer Time,
there was a time when "whatsinever" you did,
you did "to death."
Funky Broadway.

Your *eeeeeeeeeeyow* will never rest.
You remain proud, cold bodyheat and sweat,
that muthafucka Black Caesar,
the only one who ever murdered dying.

Wasn't Jesus born today?
The Big Payback: the Angel Pneumonia
(not escape-ism) calling
the Godfather only halfway home.
What you gon' play now?

Thomas Sayers Ellis
(Harlem, January 2007)

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Goodbye, Baltimore

KATE LEVIN

ACE OF SPADES. By David Matthews. Holt. 303 pp. $24.

Ideally, a boy's biggest concerns on his first day of fourth grade would be whether his lunchbox is cool enough and which teachers will assign the most homework. Things were more complex for David Matthews, who in 1977 moved from suburban DC to Baltimore, a rigidly segregated city in which David, half black and half white, found no natural crowd. Twenty minutes after being dropped off at school, he was besieged by a pack of classmates who demanded that he explain himself. Nonplussed, he said nothing, "inflaming them with a torturous game of racial keep-away."

Thirty years later, Matthews has dispensed with such reticence. In his kinetic and searching memoir *Ace of Spades*, he confronts the identity questions that bedeviled him in his youth, telling his story with incisive intelligence and often hilarious irreverence. This unusual combination distinguishes Matthews's memoir from others to which it will likely be compared, most notably James McBride's bestseller *The Color of Water*, which shares its subject matter but not its spirit. McBride, like Matthews, was born to a black father and a white Jewish mother but reared solely by the parent whom he phenotypically resembled least. Both writers describe the contradictions of growing up in a rough-and-tumble city as nerdy types who had a few feckless flirtations with crime but preferred books. Both memoirs are, in part, paeans to the authors' respective single parents. For all their similarities, however, I can't seem to remember the part in *The Color of Water* when McBride humps a lubricated foam mattress or stuffs his shorts with hairnets before gym class to create the illusion of pubic hair. Nor do I recall any anecdote about becoming enraged at a Jewish classmate for crying during a Holocaust video, or one in which he gets mugged and relishes calling the perpetrators "niggers" in front of his black parent. Probably because McBride didn't go there, as most of us wouldn't.

Matthews, who recounts all of the above, goes for broke, punctuating his narrative with a series of audacious anecdotes. He's not merely telling it like it is; he's testing us: Each outrageous self-revelation seems to dare us to rescind the sympathy he has won elsewhere. But Matthews recognizes that readers who aren't alienated by his candor will respect him all the more for it.

Or maybe he just likes telling stories. Matthews is a natural at it, with a gift for simile and an expert comic timing that paces even—or perhaps especially—the book's most freighted moments. Consider, for example, the continuation of the are-you-black-or-white grilling he's subjected to during his entree into the Baltimore public school system:

> As the mob, with me as the cynosure, reached our first-period class, they resorted to a subtler though no less politic tack:
>
> *What kind of music…you like?*
>
> Even though I (marginally) enjoyed the Jackson Five, that admission might provide partisan ammo to the students most consumed with what I was, so in a panic I threw out names of performers my grandmother liked. That's how fucked up racism is. What else on earth could have motivated a young boy, first hour in a new school, to throw away any chance at acceptance—forget about cool, we're talking basic *Lord of the Flies* do-we-eat-this-kid-or-not survival—with this reply: *Beverly Sills*.

Matthews's comic sensibility leavens *Ace of Spades* but does not make it light. Some of the facts of his life are irrefutably grim. His mother, Robin, an appealing but mentally ill woman from an Orthodox Jewish family, abandoned him and his father, a radical black journalist named Ralph Matthews Jr., several months after giving birth. They never heard from her again. Growing up, Matthews neither asked for nor was offered any information about his mother, insuring that she—and, by extension, the white world—would become symbolic of all that he wanted and all that his actual (black) life could not provide.

Compounding the absence of little David's mother is the presence of an evil stepmother: Karen, a blond, blue-eyed "wigger when there was no such word," who "peppered her speech with that seventies sine qua non noun *motherfucker*, as in, *Look, motherfucker*, which she uttered with a regularity most reserve for *umm*, or *so*." Karen beats David, but eventually, mercifully, David's father gets wise to her abuse, so father and son pack up and head for Baltimore. They move into David's grandmother's apartment in a senior citizens' home, a "wonderland of morbid prophylaxes," where David is nurtured by his loving grandmother and embarks on a romance with television ("there are worse habits," he reasons in retrospect, "like Islam or karaoke"). But David's retreat into this ersatz womb is short-lived, and soon he's forced to confront the city outside: a poor, "roiling black ghetto." Baltimore—now that the frail, pale boy must make his way around in it—becomes frankly terrifying: "My earliest years in the idylls of suburbia had been spent in color-blind adoration of my black father, my brother Elijah, my ashy friends with puffy Afros, but now things were different. This was the city, and these were niggers."

David, from his first day of school on, begins to pass—initially as white and then, more creatively, as a Jew. (There are a couple of priceless moments when, under pressure to explain his swarthiness, he tells his Jewish friends' parents that he's half-Palestinian.) Matthews neither defends nor disavows his passing, although he takes the occasional dig at himself for siding with the spineless:

> The teachers (black and white) had a brusque, dismissive way of dealing with the black kids, ignoring their raised hands as well as their insolent stares. The tacit suggestion to these kids was that their futures had already been decided for them. The teachers, like me, were not made of much, and just wanted to bet on the white steed of Caucasia.

But this is no tragic mulatto story. Mild self-abasement aside, Matthews does not present his passing as some failure of character. Rather, Baltimore shocks him into consciousness of just how bad blacks have it compared with whites, and the boy negates his blackness to spare himself some of the misery: "Life for me was not a war between black and white, or rich and poor, it was a life sentence that could be commuted only by whiteness, real or imagined."

Kate Levin is a writer in Brooklyn. Her work has also appeared in The Crier.

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James Baldwin observed in *Nobody Knows My Name* that the question of color can operate "to hide the graver questions of the self." Matthews, who until adulthood knew virtually nothing about his mother other than that she was white and had abandoned him, grew up pained by questions of who he was and where he came from. Displacing that hurt and anger onto his father—who is not merely black but an unflagging civil rights activist, a friend of Baldwin, Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael—Matthews acts out by defining himself against him. Not jazz, but John Lennon. Not black, but white. Matthews's ability to make connections between his mother, his father and his rejection of blackness—without ever minimizing the day-to-day, objective racism that simply made it easier to be white—is a great achievement.

It also makes Matthews's lack of insight into another realm, his relationship with women, so conspicuous and disappointing. This wouldn't be such a problem if sex and sexuality weren't omnipresent in *Ace of Spades*, but at times the book recalls nothing so much as *Portnoy's Complaint*, our protagonist being nearly as preoccupied with his own "battered battering ram of freedom" as Portnoy was with his.

Matthews—who describes not only his first orgasm (a nocturnal emission while his grandmother slept beside him) but his first "bucking orgasm," his adolescent innovation of masturbating to fuzzy cable and his regimen of self-stimulation while studying for the GED—wins the prize for the most literal coming-of-age story. On autoerotica Matthews is fine, and funny; the trouble is when he writes about actual women to whom he has some sexual connection. Take, for example, his account of losing his virginity:

> When she consents to sleep with me that spring before going off to some risible state college in the Midwest, I fuck her with a condom, whose wrapped center, moments before, and unseen by her, I have pierced with a fine sewing needle.
>
> You always remember your first.

With that, the chapter ends. A few pages into the next, Matthews describes a fantasy of raping a 10-year-old girl. To be fair, some context: Before sleeping with his first lover, Matthews had a frightening, racist encounter with her two brothers; he is presumably taking his revenge, Eldridge Cleaver–style, on the young lady. As for the child he imagines violating, she's just called him a nigger. What's disturbing is not Matthews's disclosure of misogynistic impulses and actions; it's his failure to examine them—not merely their immediate provocations but the experiences in which they might be rooted. We're left to draw our own conclusions, which is not so difficult: In addition to his absent mother and abusive stepmother, Matthews, a self-described "eunuch" during adolescence, was consistently rejected by women until young adulthood. But in a memoir the onus is on the writer to make these connections, and Matthews doesn't.

If there is another obstacle in our relationship with Matthews as a narrator, it's that he has spent too many nights spooning the thesaurus. Without question, he is an excellent writer: fluent, robust and with a distinct voice. In this, too, Matthews echoes Philip Roth, with a knack for that appealing admixture of erudition and vulgarity, the high and the low. Yet his language is often unnecessarily obscure—perhaps his stepmother was an "agrestic, toothless exharridan," but perhaps he could find a more accessible way to describe her, too. In these moments, Matthews's apparent concern that we admire his writing interferes with his ability to make himself known—the chief requirement of his chosen genre.

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POLITICS & PARANOIA:
THE POLITICAL EXPLOITATION
OF PARANOID ANXIETY

Noah Feldman, Todd Gitlin, Edith Kurzweil, Ashis Nandy, Avital Ronell, and Psychoanalysts from London, Paris, and New York.

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Again, we can speculate about where this comes from: *Ace of Spades* makes clear the many ways in which Matthews's identity, including his intellect, was stigmatized when he was younger. But whatever the cause, the effect is alienating, and Matthews comes off as less a pretentious writer than an insecure one.

What redeems these shortcomings is Matthews's moving portrait of his father, to whom he dedicates the book. From the beginning of *Ace of Spades*, Matthews is unreserved in his appreciation of his father's many facets—his passion for justice, his humility, his way with words, his world-weariness, his affection for his son, filtered though it may be through the lens of "cool." Nevertheless, David's willingness to be mistaken for white was a rejection of his father (albeit one Ralph understood and, implicitly, forgave). By the end of the book, Matthews is in his 30s and living in New York City; after oscillating between cross-burning cracker and black militant over the course of his life, he describes finally settling into himself. Adulthood also brings about a new dimension in Matthews's relationship with his father—the ability to talk about emotionally charged subjects once avoided, like his mother. The impression is of Matthews moving toward becoming whole. It's a process that *Ace of Spades* not only chronicles but seems to have made possible. ■

FILMS

That's the Way of the World

STUART KLAWANS

KILLER OF SHEEP • OFFSIDE • U-CARMEN

Charles Burnett's debut feature, *Killer of Sheep*, resides so far outside the norms of movies-as-usual that I might as well review it as sculpture. Let's say that it's made of stone—a possibility that's easy to imagine, given the great number of rocks that its characters fling at abandoned buildings, passing vehicles, junk lumber and each other. The setting is Watts in the 1970s, which Burnett presents as someplace random and mineral: a mad, bleached accumulation of cement dust and rubble. Yet despite all the chunks of this and that lying around, and despite the work's deliberate gaps in form (which let time pass with abrupt economy, and locations change without transition), you're likely to experience this piece not as an assemblage but as something whole, made from a single block. It's chiseled: each scene starkly lit and cleanly faceted, with its actions, editing, black-and-white cinematography and musical soundtrack standing sharp and clear against the scene on either side. *Killer of Sheep* is one of those rare films that's so substantial, you feel you could walk around it, test its weight, observe how firmly and forthrightly it meets the ground.

That ground for Burnett is African-American, working-class and (above all) familial—though which family in particular you will learn about is not immediately apparent. With brusque strokes, Burnett begins *Killer of Sheep* by carving out for you four figures who don't belong to the main body of the work, even though they're representative. They are a silent boy on the verge of puberty, seen in close-up so that his hot eyes occupy most of the screen; his little brother, cowering and weeping so that he's hardly seen at all; the father, a fleshy man in a T-shirt, who hunches over the older boy, raging at him for his own good; and finally the mother, the only member of this group who is seen in full figure, in motion. She steps forward at the end of the introductory scene to provide its punctuation: a slap to the son's face.

These first images have plenty of impact but not much visual depth, in part because the unnamed characters are framed and lit to loom in the foreground, more like archetypes than individuals, and in part because Burnett is at heart a realist. He shows no background because the house is bare. There's nothing to distract you, then, from the theme of *Killer of Sheep*, which the father literally shouts into the camera, and which is confirmed in young eyes that want to cry but won't. A man fights—with a brick if he can grab one, with bare hands if he can't.

This theme will echo again and again

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once *Killer of Sheep* focuses on its central character, Stan (Henry Gayle Sanders): husband, father, slaughterhouse worker, amateur auto repairman, insomniac. He is a powerfully built man, whose torso, bared to the summer heat, might give you another suggestion of sculpture, and whose occupation 9-to-5 is none too delicate. Many times in the course of the film, though, Stan will resist being drawn into violence, despite his grim awareness that he "might harm someone else." He stands apart, appalled, at the prospect of liquor-store hold-ups, or the sight of a man wounded in a street brawl. He shakes his head in revulsion when approached by two happy-go-lucky acquaintances who want to hire him as an accessory to murder—not to do anything, you know, just to be there. Stan is taciturn on that occasion, though his wife (Kaycee Moore) is not. She sweeps through the screen door of their bungalow, onto the front porch and down the steps, railing against all the men who don't know God gave them brains. But Stan knows. He's got so much on his mind that he no longer smiles, or rests, or makes love to his wife.

So, to the tally of formal gaps in *Killer of Sheep*, you can add gaps of another kind: between men and women, between character and circumstance, between Stan and the world around him.

As much as these breaks are painful, they can also strike you by turns as absurd, uncanny, ironic or just plain funny. A realist like Burnett can find reasons for all these moods right in front of him. The film's children provide him with an especially rich source, starting with Stan's beloved young daughter Angela (Angela Burnett), who makes her indelible first appearance wearing a rubber dog mask and sucking her thumb. Later, some of the older kids (not Angela, thank God) demonstrate their high spirits by jumping across the sky—or, rather, from one building's roof to another—in an astonishing shot that makes your heart leap at its terror and freedom.

Strangely, there are no teenagers among these kids. The population of *Killer of Sheep* is evenly divided between grown-ups (most of them in their 30s) and younger children (who may talk trash but have not reached puberty). What's missing—another gap—is the age when sexual desire is most overwhelming and adventurous. Regret, longing, sorrow and hope all complicate the urge for the adults; while for Angela, lovemaking is just part of a song by Earth, Wind and Fire, which she belts out to herself and her doll while her mother looks on quietly and smiles.

For most viewers, the biggest gap of all in *Killer of Sheep* will probably be the plot. There isn't any. Burnett spins out little stories (a failed attempt to buy a used engine for a car, a failed excursion out of Watts to the race track), which sometimes involve side trips into lives other than Stan's. You also see single, long scenes that are complete in themselves, like Joyce's epiphanies. (In one of these, Stan and his wife dance in their house to Dinah Washington's "This Bitter Earth," gradually coming closer to each other—until he wordlessly shrugs out of her arms and walks away. In another, even more devastating scene, he ignores her invitation to bed and instead lets little Angela come into his lap. She lingers there, enjoying his embrace, while studying her mother with puzzlement and guilt.) Intercut

EVENTS

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Amy Goodman

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Worker Education National Conference Call

■ Storming the Heavens: Worker education and social activism commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the CUNY Centers for Worker Education. A conference for labor scholars, educators, trade unionists, current and former worker-students. June 1–2, 25 Broadway, New York City. Proposals are welcome for papers, presentations and panels exploring the history, politics and contemporary significance of worker education in the US and abroad. Teachers, staff and students in worker education programs are encouraged to contribute to the discourse reflecting their institutional and personal experiences and social impact. Labor scholars and trade unionists are especially encouraged to attend and/or participate. www.workereducation.org (212) 966-4014.

Politics and Paranoia

■ The Political Exploitation of Paranoid Anxiety. Friday evening, March 30, and Saturday, March 31, New York University and Cooper Union. Speakers: Slavoj Zizek, Noah Feldman, Avital Ronell, Todd Gitlin, Edith Kurzweil, Ashis Nandy and psychoanalysts from England, France and America. Interdisciplinary conference discusses sociopolitical and affective control in arousing paranoid anxiety through manipulating the media to maintain power relations. Relevant sociopolitical, legal, media and psychoanalytic perspectives aim to elucidate processes of political paranoia in different societies. Organized by National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis and Asian/Pacific/American Institute of NYU. For information, registration, fees, contact: www.naap.org (Annette Overby Conference). (212) 741-0515.

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with these domestic moments and the views of the neighborhood, you see periodic images of Stan at work in the slaughterhouse. What you don't get, though, is an overall narrative that would make some of these scenes into climaxes while treating others as mere exposition or transition. Instead, each scene in *Killer of Sheep* has its own weight, its own mood and often its own music—anything from a Paul Robeson lullabye to a Little Walter blues to William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony.*

The effect is humane in spirit, tentatively hopeful at the end, but rock-hard and pitiless in its honesty. Burnett persuades you that you're seeing the world as it really is for these characters, whether they're played by the large and vivid roster of nonprofessionals or by the cast's two real actors, the profoundly moving Sanders and Moore. Their lives are denuded in many ways, materially impoverished and spiritually numbed; but for all that, they have the grandeur of unchallengeable fact.

All that remains for me to say is that this stunning film has been around since 1977, winning prizes and distinctions of many kinds, and almost nobody has had a chance to see it. Made for less than $10,000 by a cast and crew that could shoot only on weekends, *Killer of Sheep* was first shown sporadically, at festival, museum and university screenings, and then hardly shown at all. The original 16-millimeter elements sat in their cans, decaying; the existing 16-millimeter prints were scratched and faded; and a home video release was impossible, because Burnett hadn't cleared the rights for his soundtrack's wonderful music. He'd never had the money.

The history of film has too many such stories—but this one has a happy ending. With financial support from various sources, the UCLA Film & Television Archive has restored *Killer of Sheep* and bumped it up to the 35-millimeter glory it never had. This fresh version of the film, with the music rights cleared at last, is now being distributed nationally by Milestone Film & Video, beginning with runs at the IFC Center in New York City and the Nuart in Los Angeles. In effect, Milestone is giving *Killer of Sheep* its debut theatrical release.

I feel safe in calling it one of the best new films of 2007.

In *Offside*, Jafar Panahi has given himself a break from the intensity of his most recent films—the claustrophobic, desperate maze of women's lives in *The Circle*, the abjection of the wounded, would-be criminal in *Crimson Gold*. Instead, his new picture takes place within a holiday atmosphere. Busloads of wildly excited fans stream into Tehran's soccer stadium, cheer themselves hoarse for their team and then pour out into a nocturnal carnival of blaring car horns, cheap fireworks, flag-waving and street dancing. Iran has beat Bahrain! Iran is going to the World Cup!

This much of *Offside* is documentary: shot daringly and exhilaratingly on the fly, while the real events unfolded. The fictional part concerns half a dozen young women whom Panahi assembled as his cast, with each disguised as a young man. It is illegal, you see, for women to enter the stadium, even if they love soccer as much as their fathers do, even if they play the sport better than their brothers. So, evidently, it's common for a few determined girls to try to sneak in. *Offside* is the deceptively light story of such impostors—their schemes, their capture, their frustration at being held where they can hear the match but not see it—and of the soldiers who keep the women under arrest.

A clue about the guardians: They're not having fun, either.

You, however, will probably have a ball with *Offside*, as you get to know the characters, marvel at their get-ups, share in their boisterous defiance and at last watch them join the celebration. These women won't be denied. Nor will Panahi, who in effect sneaked himself and his crew into the midst of a big public event, much as his characters sneak into the stadium.

Dissidence has rarely been such a kick.

Short Take: The world is full of *Carmens*—Preminger's Southern military-base *Carmen Jones*, Godard's bank-heist nuthouse *Prénom Carmen* (with music by Beethoven), Saura's flamenco rehearsal *Carmen*, Rosi's full-dress Andalusian *Carmen*, Joseph Gaï Ramaka's Afro-pop bisexual Senegalese *Karmen Geï*. Now we've got a South African shantytown *U-Carmen* directed by Mark Dornford-May and conducted by Charles Hazlewood, with the Cape Town–based troupe Dimpho Di Kopane playing Bizet's score and singing in Xhosa.

Pauline Malefane, who helped adapt the libretto, is simply magnificent in the title role, except vocally. She shrieks in the upper register and her intonation, at best, is approximate. These are no small problems when you're listening to two hours of opera. The compensation: Malefane is as wild and dangerous as Carmen should be, with nothing about her of the conventional sexpot. Andile Tshoni, a much stronger singer, matches her well as her Jongikhaya (that is, Don José). The irresistible chorus is an entire township.

U-Carmen has its US premiere at Film Forum in New York, March 28–April 10. ■

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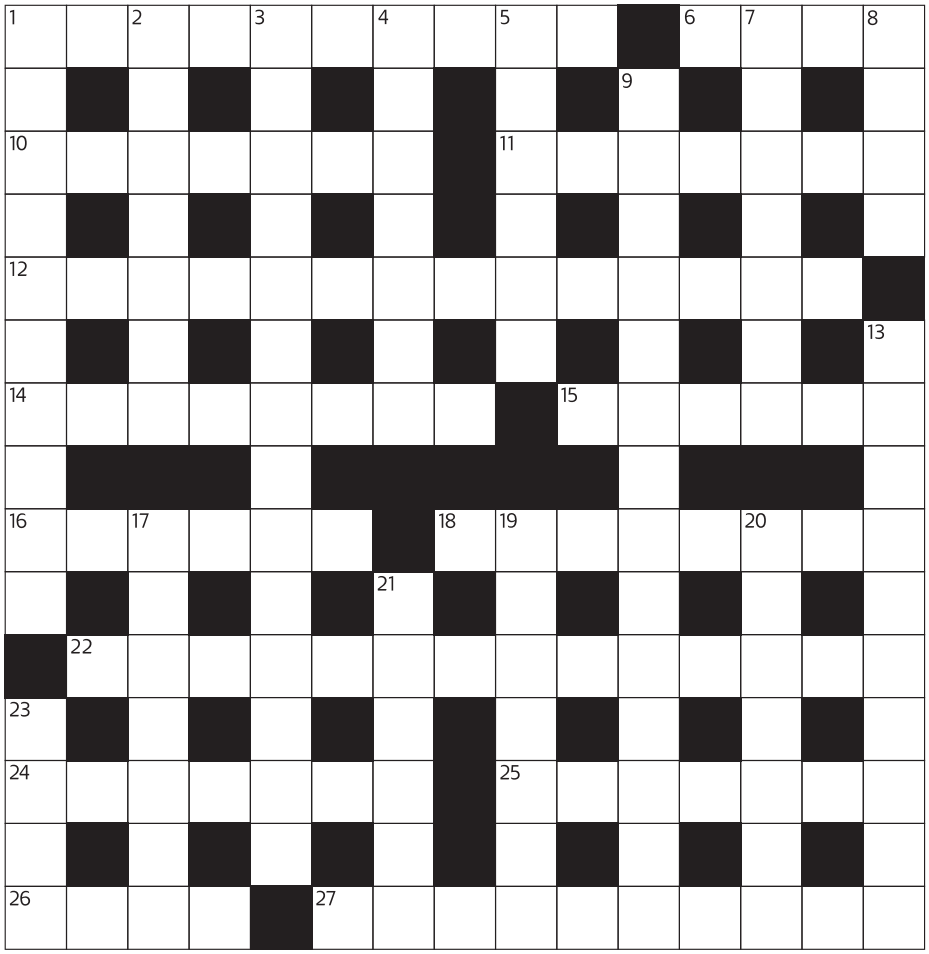

ACROSS

1 and **6** You can get such things beneath the vendor's place of business being so bodied. (14)

10 Shakespearean character, sort of shot up, right? (7)

11 Sort of lettuce, with something to stick outside, being rather sugary. (7)

12 You won't drink the water if you do, and play it safe. (5,4,5)

14 All tied up with a New Year's celebration overseas at this place, to start devotions. (8)

15 Even disturbed by a word of hesitation, this would be a display only on the surface. (6)

16 They might be jabs to the jaw, but the civil type are of some concern. (6)

18 Swap evil-doing for this, but it's what one sometimes does when seeking a new form of transportation. (6,2)

22 A questionable labor practice when such might be down, but a noteworthy achievement to the woman's place of rest at the sound of a bell. (14)

24 What one may do to the lawn doesn't go on, but spoils the result. (4-3)

25 Work with something too much and you'll get nothing on an important day with such a stratagem. (7)

26 See 8 down

27 My casting's not good, but you might be fit to indulge in them. (10)

DOWN

1 Not down where the guns might be kept, but one possibly knocks the stuffing out of things when one does. (10)

2 Take away the value of improper trade, which should go to court shortly. (7)

3 If you make one it should at least stand for something! (About now a Spanish uncle needs direction.) (14)

4 Earth land in France—one-quarter English. (7)

5 Text message: gotta go in the river for carp. (6)

7 One will eventually be a Girl Scout to have something like cheese around it. (7)

8 and **26** across Certainly not a rough tune for the late service. (8)

9 Represented by the capital quality of Taurus—or just a rather perverse quality? (14)

13 Go over the limit, strangers (strangely enough) needing direction. (10)

17 Is the King upset about her being in such a pickle? (7)

19 One might get such at the sauna, but it's a funny way to manipulate a feather! (7)

20 They often get a response, but you could find it mulish, almost. (7)

21 Where one might expect to find a ringer, with a little spirit right by, surrounding it. (6)

23 Going in circles, cars get wrecked easily. (4)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3075

	I	M	P	R	E	S	S	I	O	N	S			
	T		E		E		O		R		U		T	
M	O	O	N	B	E	A	M		K	O	D	I	A	K
	S		D		L		E		S		G		M	
A	S	P	I	R	I	N		S	O	M	E	D	A	Y
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	E				E		T		A		T		L	
R	E	D	C	O	A	T		S	C	O	R	P	I	O
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		W	E	A	T	H	E	R	W	I	S	E		

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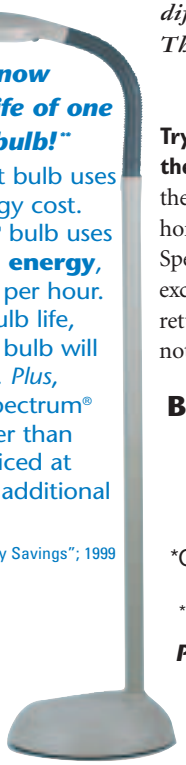
**Source: "Lighting the Way to Energy Savings"; 1999



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Important? Yes, very important.

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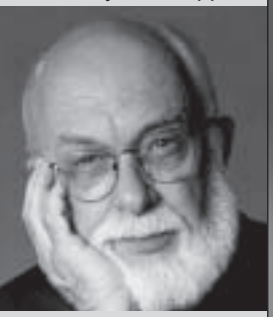
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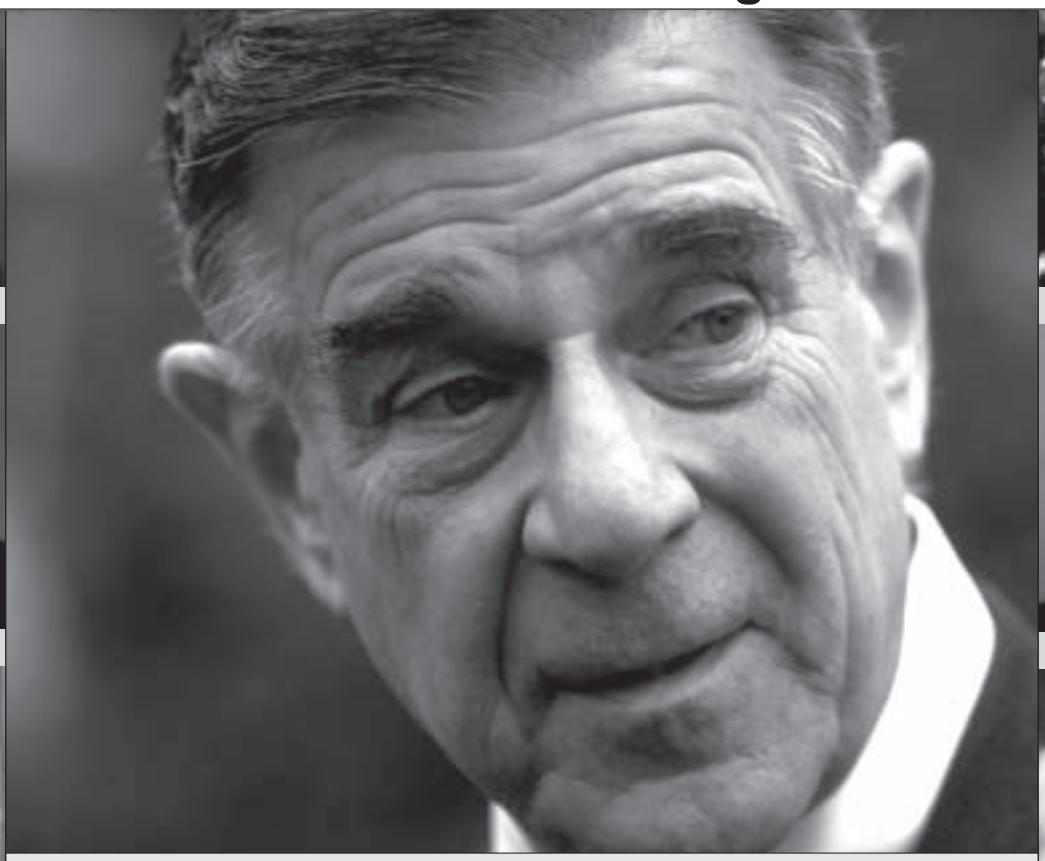

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